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John Stanning

MEDITATIONS
UPON OUR
SAVIOUR'S
PARABLE
OF THE
Prodigal Son.

BEING
Several SERMONS on the fifteenth
Chapter of St. *Luke's* Gospel.

By O B A D I A H G R E W D. D.
late Minister of the Gospel in *Coventry*.

PART I.

L O N D O N,

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GUIL. SILL.



THE PREFACE.

NO Man, I think, who shall consider the Allegorical Comments which some, especially of the Fathers, have given us upon several Parts of Scripture, and even St. Paul himself, and our Saviour also upon divers of his own Parables, but will say, I have been modest in the Doctrinal Inferences made from the Parable here before us.

It cannot be denied, but that as a

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wise man may have more Reasons than One for what he saith, so may he design to teach more than one thing, or sort of persons thereby: How much more reasonable is it then, that we allow the same to that infinite Wisdom, by which our Blessed Saviour always spake? Not only directing his Words to the Generation then in being, but also inspiring his Apostles to transmit them in writing to all Posterity. So that as they had their Lessons to learn then, so have we ours now, from the self same words, so far as our Case may any way bear a proportion unto theirs. For it is not intelligible, to what end they should be left us in writing, if we were not concerned to learn something of Importance from them, as well as they.

Some-

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Something, I say, and that from every Word or Clause, so far, as without any vain and affected straining may be soberly inferr'd, and the truth thereof confirm'd by other parts of Scripture. For it were highly dishonourable to our Saviour, to think, That he, who was so much against Battologies in his Disciples, should himself have the Vanity, or be forced, for want of skill, to use any words only to fill up Vacuities in his Discourse. So that, although nothing should be strained, yet is there not a Clause in this whole Parable, which affords not some particular and important Instruction. Otherwise our Saviour could very easily, and would much rather have left it out.

From the consideration of what hath been said, it seemeth plain, That this
first

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first part of the Parable of the Prodigal pointeth not only to the Scribes and Pharisees, but to every unconverted man, whose Nature and Condition are herein clearly and fully represented; as one that is wilfull and heady, blind and desperately bent upon his Lusts, against the will of God, to the wounding, and greatest danger of undoing his own Soul. In a word, shewing him to be nothing else but Decalogus inversus, the Ten Commandments turned upside down. The deformity of fall'n Man being greater than even that of Nebuchadnezzar, when from a mighty Monarch, he fell into a kind of Brutality, and was turned out to graze with the Beasts of the field. What saith the Spirit of God himself? Psal. 49.20. Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the Beasts that perish. Nor

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Nor doth this Character belong only to the Vicious and Debauched, but unto the Wisest and most Civilliz'd of Men, who do not what they do in a sound Faith of God Almighty's Word, a sincere Obedience to his Law, in dependance upon the help of his Holy Spirit, out of Love and Design for his Glory, and that through the merits of Jesus Christ they may be happy in the enjoyment of him in the end. Far greater Things than the most accomplished Morality (as we take the word from the Latines, and they their Notions hereof from the Greeks) could ever pretend unto. So far, that I shall not do so great a dishonour to the Christian Religion, as to make it a Question, by going about to prove it.

That wise man Cato, who was called
Homo

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Homo Virtuti simillimus, *the very Picture of Virtue*; yet (*in the fourth Book of his Morals*) scoffed at God's Institutions in the Ceremonial Law, which prefigured the death of our Lord Jesus Christ for lost Sinners.

Stultitia est, morte alterius sperare salutem.

And Plato, though styled Divine, yet did rather dream of God than know him distinctly, as was the judgment of Lactantius concerning him; Lib. de vanitate Philosophiæ & Philosophorum.

But however it may be to us a secret, what God, the Sovereign Lord of all, may do with any persons from amongst the Jews, and before the Gospel; yet as for those to whom it hath been preach-

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preached, we are sure, That without Faith it is impossible to please God: And, that he that believeth not, *so doth not all those things that are the demonstrations of a Gospel Faith*, shall be damned.

Let me therefore conclude with this Exhortation to every Reader : First try your self by this Standard, whether you are weight , by the Character here before you, whether you be included in it, and that it expresth your own heart, yea or no. If it doth, then be afraid of your self, and tremble at the Condition you are in. If it doth not , then have compassion on those whom it doth include : And to Compassion add, you cannot choose but add, your Prayers ; and to both your best and prudent endeavours to reclaim them ; remembering, amongst many other encourage-

a ments,

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ments, that great one which the Apostle James mentions, viz. That he who converts a sinner from the errour of his way, shall save a Soul, and hide a multitude of sins. And that this may be the blessed fruit, as of the ensuing Treatise, so of all other means to be used in order thereunto, is the most affectionate Prayer of the Author

O. G.

THE



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Meditations

Meditations upon the Parable of the Prodigal Son.

CHAPTER I.

Sheweth the nature and use of Parables: The occasion of this following Parable: The different and further Import hereof, above that of the two former: And its division into three general Parts.

LUKE XV. 11, 12, 13. &c.

And he said, A certain man had two Sons: And the younger of them said to his Father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after, the younger Son gathered all together, and took his journey into a farr Country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living, &c.



THIS is one of the three remarkable Parables spoken by our blessed Saviour in this Chapter, the lost Sheep, the lost piece of Silver, and the lost Son, all three having one and the same Scope, *viz.* To shew the care of God in seek-

B

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ing lost Sinners, and the comfort he takes in finding them; or his great readiness to receive a returning Sinner.

Now the reason why Christ used Parables so much in his preaching, was in general, That the Scripture might be fulfilled: *All these things spake Jesus unto the Multitude in Parables, and without a Parable spake he not unto them: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in Parables, I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world, Matth. 13. 34, 35.* And more particularly he did it in mercy to some; *Mark 4. 33. And with many such Parables spake he the Word unto them, as they were able to hear it.* And to others in Judgment; *Luke 8. 10. ---but to others in Parables; that seeing, they might not see; and hearing, they might not understand.* For Parables are sometimes called in Scripture *Dark sayings*; *I will incline mine ear to a Parable, I will open my dark saying upon the Harp, Psal. 49. 4.* So said the Disciples of them, *John 16. 29. Now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no Proverb, or Parable.* A Parable is like a Candle in a dark Lanthorn, there is light within, but darkness without. Indeed Parables are the extracts and spirits of Wisdom, and have usually come from the mouths of Rulers, or other wise men: *Solomon spake three thousand Parables, or Proverbs. Nor is a Parable becoming the mouth of a Fool, Prov. 26. 7.*

Therefore the Hebrew *Masbal*, which signifieth to speak Parabolically, signifies also to bear Rule or Dominion: For Parables have influence upon all the Faculties of man, upon the Understanding, *Joh.*

Psal. 78. 2.

Psal. 78. 2.

1 Kings 4. 32.

3. 12. They help the Memory, as a Thread keeps together loose Beads. They quicken the Affections: *Where had this man this wisdom?* said they of Jesus, when he had spoken so many Parables: and *they wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth.* Yea, Parables have power on the Conscience; so had *Nathan's* on *David's*, 2 Sam.

Matth. 13. 54.

Luke 4. 22.

12.

Yet I must commend this Rule to you in all Parables; you must not be over-curious to set in a frame, as it were, every thing or word in a Parable, lest you spoil the Analogy. For in Parables some Phrases are used for the decorum of them, as fitting Colours in a Mapp or Picture, that are not of the Essence of it, but for Ornament. And this we see in Christ's expounding of his own Parables; in doing which he gives only the scope and main drift of them: which, if well considered, might have saved the Schoolmen the labour of their vain Curiosities and Disputes about them. In a word, Parables are Similitudes fetched from Earthly things which are in common use, to help the Understanding in Spiritual and Heavenly things. So to parabolize in the Hebrew and Greek, signifies to liken or compare.

Now for the occasion of this and the other two Parables in this Chapter, we have it in the beginning of it; *There drew near unto him all the Publicans and Scribes to hear him:* And the Scribes and Pharisees murmured, saying, *This man receiveth sinners, &c.* Whereupon he spake this Parable to them, saying, *What man of you having one hundred Sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the Wilderness, and go after*

that which is lost, till he find it? and when he hath found it, he lays it on his shoulders rejoicing. Here our Lord Jesus shews these men their Errour, in their repining at his conversing with those Heathen men, by shewing God's care and readiness for, and his delight in the conversion of lost sinners. And Christ enlarges himself on this Subject by three Parables. And why so many to the same purpose? Surely to convince the murmuring Scribes and Pharisees, and to encourage the poor Publicans and Sinners that were now in the way of Conversion.

Yet there is one thing of observation as to these three Parables, and that is the difference that seems to be in this last of the lost Son, and those of the lost Sheep and lost piece of Silver. The lost Sheep is sought for by the Shepherd, and the lost piece of Silver is sought by the Woman; but the lost Son seems to seek his Father: and so it may seem to shew, How a lost Sinner first seeketh God, and is first in motion to Conversion.

But no such matter, nor is it here meant. In the two first Parables the contrary is plain, That God is first in seeking lost Sinners: As in the Prophet, *I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not.* The words sound somewhat harsh for want of the word [now], which must be understood, I am now found of them that sought me not---I am now sought of them that asked not for me. The Apostle quoting this place of the Prophet saith thus, *I was found of them that sought me not: I was made manifest to them that asked not after me.* The expressions are like those in *Isaiah, Before they call, I will answer.* Both hold out the preventive Mercy and Grace of God;

Ma. 65. 2.

Rom. 10. 2.

Ma. 65. 24.

God ; he is first in the Call and Conversion of Sinners. The Jews were *in their blood*, when the Lord called them, *Ezek. 16.* and the Gentiles doting upon Idols. *Jerusalem was a City sought out, Isa. 62. 12.* and Christ was the Seeker ; *The Son of man is come to seek, and to save that which was lost.* Luke 19. 10. Yea, God and Christ, Father and Son, seek and beseech the Sinner ; *As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.* 2 Cor. 5. 2.

Where is that converted Sinner, that can or dare say, that he was before God in the work ? *When I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, live ; yea, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, live.* Ezek. 16. 6. As the Eye-lids in the Looking-glass move not, but as the Eyes that look into the Glass move : so is it in a Sinner's Conversion to God ; God is the first mover and the first worker ; the Sinner's Motion is but the reflection of Gods. Who did strike the first stroke in *Paul's* Conversion ? He that struck him to the Earth, which was the Lord. *Lazarus* rose up, and came forth of the Grave ; but it was at Christ's loud Call ; that is, by his Power. Acts 9. John 11.]

As therefore the two former Parables in their phrases shew, That God first seeks a lost Sinner ; so this third, of the lost Son, imports, That a Sinner must seek God ; he must seek, though he be not first in seeking : *Seek ye the Lord while he may be found ; Isa. 55. 6, 7. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord.* There are some things for a man to do about his Conversion, but nothing in it ; that is God's work.

Note.

Yet man hath ever made a great strife and contro-
versie between his Will and God's. This was the
reason of the fall of man: and ever since there hath
been overmuch ascribed to the power of man's Will;
as though little of it were lost by the fall. This hath
been the pride of some men in most Ages, supposing
man's Will to have lost little of its strength; as *Samp-
son* thought, when he wakened after his Locks were
cut off; *I will go out as at other times before*; not
knowing that his strength was departed. But God
hath still kept up Instruments, to lay down these
Mole-hills; not wronging Nature, but righting
Grace; and causing men to cry Grace, Grace, to a
Sinners Conversion, as they did to the Head-stone
of the Temple, *Zach. 3*.

Judges 16.

Aug.

Now of this Parable there are three parts; where-
of, though the Similitude be of outward things, yet
there is a Spiritual meaning, which we must search
out: We must break the Bone for the Marrow there-
in contained; and the Marrow lies in these three
things, or particulars, taught us in the three parts of
the Parable.

1.

We have a Description of the state of a lost Sin-
ner, and what manner of man he is in his Natural
Condition; In the younger Son's requiring his Por-
tion of his Father, and going from his Father's
House into a farr Country, and mispending it all
there, and making any sorry shift rather than to re-
turn back to his Father's House, *to the 17th verse*.

2.

We have the Return of a lost Sinner, and how
he comes into the state of Grace, described in the
Prodigal's coming to himself, and coming back, and
humbling himself to his Father, *to the 22th verse*.

3.

The willingness of God to receive returning Sin-
ners,

ners, and the delight he takes in such ; shewed in the Father's meeting his returning Son, and the joyful entertainment he gave him, *from the 22th verse to the end of the Chapter.*

So that the first of these three Persons is God the Father ; he is intended : The other two are Sons of God ; the one a humble repenting Publican , the other a proud murmuring Pharisee.

But how can these be called the Sons of God? Quest.

God hath not only Sons by Adoption in Christ Answer.
 Jesus, as all the Saints are ; but he hath Sons by Gal. 3.
 Creation ; so Angels are the Sons of God : *There* Job 1.6.
was a day, when the Sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord. And all men are the
 Sons of God : *He breathed into man the breath of life,* Gen. 2. 7. Man's Spirit is immediately from
 God, and therefore he is called *the Father of Spirits.* Heb. 12. 9.
 And *Adam* is called *the Son of God : which was the* Luke 3. ult.
Son of Seth, which was the Son of Adam, which was the Son of God. And thus these Publicans and
 Sinners were the Sons of God.

And there are Sons of God by Profession ; so were the Jews in opposition to the Gentiles : *When Israel was a Child, then I loved him , and called my Son out of Egypt,* Hos. 11. 1. And thus the Scribes and Pharisees were the Sons of God.

It's true, there are divers Opinions of these two Sons, whom they should represent. Some make the Angels the elder Son, and Man the younger ; but this cannot be : For the Angels murmur not at the tenderness of God to lost Man, as here the elder Son does, but rejoyce at it, *verse 7, 10. of this Chapter, and 14th of the second.*

Others think a Regenerate and Unregenerate
 man :

man are here personated : But neither can this be ; because Regenerate men do not grudge at God's receiving the greatest sinners into Grace and Favour, but are glad, *Acts* 11.23. There are other thoughts in the Case besides these.

But the most rational and most appearing Sense and Interpretation is, That by the elder Son is meant the Scribes and Pharisees, and by the younger the Publicans and Sinners ; for to these, and of these Jesus was now speaking. And as the elder Son grumbled that his Father so entertained his Prodigal Brother, that had spent all upon Harlots, *verse* 30. so the Pharisees and Scribes murmured that Jesus received Sinners, and did eat with them, *verse* 2. And this sense is held out by Christ himself in another Parable of two Sons : *Verily I say unto you* (meaning the Priests) *that the Publicans and the Harlots go into the Kingdom of God before you.* Self-judging Sinners sooner get into a state of Grace than Self-justiciaries. The greatest Sinners sooner come unto Christ, than self-conceited Moralists ; Self-righteousness keeps men off from Christ : Such men settle on their own bottoms.

Matth. 21.28,
31.

Rom. 9. 30, 31.
& 10.3.

CHAP.

C H A P. II.

Giveth the General Doctrine of the whole Parable; illustrating God's gracious Reception of Returning Sinners, in several particulars.

HAVING shewed you the general import and parts of the Parable, I come now to the consideration of those several points of Doctrine therein contained. And first of that which seems to be the most conspicuous Doctrine from the whole Parable. Afterwards of those in their order, which result from the several Parts. The first I shall lay down, and illustrate in this Chapter; and it is this, That God doth very graciously receive returning sinners. You know the History of *David's* carriage to *Absolom* after he had murthered his brother; *David* was highly displeased with *Absolom*, so that he was forced out of his Fathers presence three years; yet after it is said, *That the soul of King David longed to go forth unto Absolom*. And when *Absolom* afterwards came into his presence, and bowed himself before the King, it's said, *The King kissed Absolom*, Chap. 14.

The general
Doctrine from
the Parable.
2 Sam. 13.

Alas, this is nothing to the bowels of God towards a self-bemoaning sinner: *I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself, therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him.* Jer. 32. 18, 19, 20.

C

God

Note.

2 Cor. 5. 2.

Ezek. 33. 11.

God is irreconcilable to sinning Angels ; he hath cast them down to Hell , and *delivered them into chains of darkness to be reserved unto Judgment*, 2 Pet. 2. 4. but he sues to sinning men for reconciliation ; *As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.* You know what mourning words he put into *Ezekiel's* mouth ; *Say to the house of Israel, who say, If our transgressions and sins be upon us , and we pine away in them, how should we then live? Say unto them, As I live saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?* No man can be so serious in any Case, as God is in this ; in his desires that sinners should repent, and return and live.

There are some things that the Devil frequently gets into the thoughts of awakened sinners to dash them in this case.

1. One is the thought of God's Decrees ; but herein the Devil doth grossly abuse both God and the sinner : For let me tell you, That as the Decrees of God did not at all clash with mans power given him in Innocency, to have been happy for ever , so neither do they clash with God's affectionate inviting lost sinners to return to him since the fall , no more than his Prescience would do if there were no Decree : Fore events are as sure upon God's Prescience as upon his Decrees : And this made *Socinus* to deny the Prescience of God.

2. And as the Decree was no cause at all of mans fall, but his own Will, he would hearken to the Woman, and to the Serpent , rather than to God, and

and would eat ; so God's Decree is no cause at all of man's damnation : The Decree of God damns no man , but his own Will : *Why will ye die O house of Israel ? I would , and ye would not . Ye will not come to me that ye might have life . We will not have this man to reign over us .* God's Decree of Reprobation ; as it's called , does only , for ought appears to me , leave some men to be proceeded with in a way of Justice . And assuredly mens damnation will be found to be of themselves : O Israel , *Thou hast destroyed thy self .*

Ezek. 33. 11.

Matth. 23. 37.

Joh. 5. 40.

Luke 19. 14.

Psal. 13. 9.

Note.

3. God's Decree is not the first thing that a sinner is to consider in his returning unto God , but God's Call , and Christ's Invitation . These are the first things which the sinner is to mind ; *Why will ye die ? Come unto me all ye that are heavy laden , and I will give you rest : and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out .*

Matth. 11. 28.

John 6. 37.

Mens election is not a ground for their returning to God ; but their return to God is a proof of their election . It's true , Election is the first in order in God's acting , but Conversion is the first in order of ours : we must be Called before we can know that we are Elected , 2 *Pet. 1. 10.* Remember this , that a sinners busi- ness , that he is put upon in the Scriptures , is his return to God , and to believe in Christ : This is his Call .

Note.

But then here the Tempter pusses again , and bids thee reason thus : If I knew that Christ died for me , I say for me , then I could set my self to believe , and that in hope . Poor Soul ! look upon this as a Temptation also ; and consider this well , That the Scripture hath given thee as much assurance , that Christ died for thee , as any sinner else that doth not yet believe ,

or as to any believer before he did believe : Thou knowest as much of Christ's dying for thee, as any Saint in the world did before he did believe in Christ.

And again, why not Christ die for thee ? because thou art a sinner ? Why, he died for such : wert thou not a sinner, thou wouldest have no need of Christ ; *The whole need not the Physician.* Christ had not died, if thou and I had not been sinners. Or is thy doubt whether Christ died for thee, because thou art so great a sinner ? consider what *Paul* says in his own case, *Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.* Many of the greatest sort of sinners were called by Christ when he was on earth, Publicans and Harlots ; that woman of *Samarita*, that was an Idolater and an Harlot ; and that notorious woman called a sinner, *Luke 7.* You cannot be ignorant how many Instances of this nature there are in Scripture ; *Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious, but I obtained mercy.* So that well may the Scripture say, *The grace of our Lord is exceeding abundant ; hath abounded to flowing over : And where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.*

The matter is not what a sinner thou hast been, or art ; but how thou standest affected to thy sinful state, and how thy mind stands towards a better. If thou beest so far come to thy self, as to be upon thoughts of returning to God, as it's said of this Prodigal afterwards, now take heed of the Devil's Sophistry ; now he will be pushing thee with doubtful disputations and reasonings, to hinder the main work, *viz.* the bewailing thy sinful state, and thy self in it, and looking out for relief.

But

But I shall further clear this Point by several observables in the Parable; and indeed, amongst all the Parables of Christ, this is the fullest of affections, and set forth in the liveliest colours to humbled sinners; and you shall see it in six Particulars.

First, you may observe how God exceeds the returning sinner in affections: here the old Father sees his Son a great way off; his eyes were not dim, as *Isaac's* were, who could not by his sight distinguish between *Jacob* and *Esau*, though close by him: God can distinguish betwixt serious Penitents and feignedly turning *Judah*, *Jer. 3. 10. He knows what is in man, John 2. 25.*

And then he ran to meet his Son; he stood not still as a Father, an offended Father might have done, till his offending Son came to him: No, his bowels were moved towards him, as towards *Ephraim*, *Jer. 31. 20.* Yea observe, the Son only goes to his Father, but the Father runs to meet the Son. There are greater affections in God towards a repenting sinner, than in such a sinner towards God; God out-does him in affections.

And then, when they meet, the Father does not take him by the hand, which had been much for a displeased Father; but falls on his neck and kisses him, as *Joseph* did on his Brethrens that had sold him into *Egypt*.

O the riches of mercy in God towards repenting and returning sinners! to such he becomes the Father of Mercies, begetting mercy after mercy for them. Yea, once more observe, That though the repenting Prodigal Son said in himself, *I will go unto my Father, and say, Father, I have sinned-----* yet he did it not, till his Father had fallen on his neck and

Note.

and embraced him. The kindest repentings for sins are after the sinners sense and experience of the free mercy and grace of God.

2. Secondly, you shall observe in the Parable, how God doth graciously take notice of small beginnings of Grace in a true Convert; he excepts of sparks ^{accepts} before they flame; he despiseth not the day of small things in a seriously returning sinner: when this Prodigal came to himself, and but said, *I will arise, and go to my Father*; though yet a great way off God saw him, and went towards him.

When poor sinners begin to set their faces towards God, he is much pleased with it; he notes their secret sighings and hidden groanings. When the heart begins to melt, he makes much of such beginnings; *he will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax*, Isa. 42. 3. A Hen will give over sitting a rotten Egg, but while there is life in it she will not leave it: Why so God will at length cast off unsound hearts, feignedly turning sinners, as they are called Jer. 3. 10. albeit he take some present notice of their external humblings, as of *Abab's*, 1 Kings 21. but if the heart of a sinner be broken indeed, and indeed pointing to God, now he regards the offers of such a sinner; he will strengthen the bruised reed, and not break it; and he will blow up the sparks of smoking flax, and not put them out. O the riches of Grace, of the grace of God, who before we come to act, accepts of secret and serious purposes! *I said, saith David, I will confess my transgression to the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquities of my sin*, Psal. 32. 5. God's ear was at *David's* heart, before *David's* Confession could be in his mouth; like that in *Isai-*

ab

ab 68. 24. *Before they call I will answer* —

God takes notice of the preparations and first motions of the heart towards himself; *Because it was in thine heart to build me an house, thou didst well; forasmuch as it was in thine heart.* 2 Chron. 6.8. God's gracious and tender dealing with a sinner upon his first setting out towards him, is very observable.

But here the lazy sinner must not think to ingratiate his dull acknowledgments of his sins, and to get acceptance with God at his cold *Lord have mercy upon me*; as if God would be found of such as these. He accepts of the Prodigal's thoughts and resolves of returning, because he saw he was restless in himself, till he was returned; *but the sluggard desireth and hath nothing*, Prov. 13.4. God respects not the sparks of a flint, though he make much of those of smoking flax. The cold forced Confession of hard hearted Pharaoh, *I have sinned this time*, Exod. 9. was not much to God: God rejects the humblings of a customary sinner, *that afflicts his soul only for a day*, Isa. 58. 5. such Penitents may expect much from God, v. 3. but God regards them little.

Jesus Christ was sent by his Father *to bind up the broken hearted*, Isa. 61. 1. The outwardly flourishing Hypocrite and proud Justiciary may spread forth their hands, yet God will hide his eyes from them; *and though they make many prayers*, God will not hear: But for poor souls that are serious in setting their faces towards God, and wait humbly on free grace; God will answer them before they call, and hear before they ask; that is, his mercy and grace shall prevent them: He observes the humble motions of their hearts with content: God graciously

ciously takes notice of small beginnings of grace in a true Convert.

3

Thirdly, God mercifully remits the remembrance of the former sins of a converting sinner. The elder Brother of this Prodigal upbraids him with his former loose life, but his Father does not mention it to him. The Silences of Scripture are Instructing; the Holy Ghost remembers us of *Job's* Patience, but speaks not a word of his Passions.

James 5. 11.

Take notice of it, thou poor relenting sinner; though the proud Pharisees of the world may throw thy former vileness, as dirt, in thy face, when thou art returning to God, yet God will not do so: *If the wicked turn from all his sins, his sins shall not be mentioned to him.* A strange thing! he that remembers every thing, will forget such a mans sins.

Ezek. 18. 21.

Ezek. 16. 11.

Indeed you must not forget them, though God will; no, not when they are forgiven: *You shall remember and be confounded — when I am pacified toward you.* Yet God will not upbraid you with them, though you do your selves.

2 Sam. 15. 2.

It is certain that God does, and will remember the sins of unhumbled and unchanged sinners; he hath sworn he will, *Amos 8. 7. The Lord hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, i. e. himself; surely I will never forget any of their works. I remember what Amalek did to Israel.* This was four hundred years since: *Now will he remember their iniquity.* But to Souls humbled for sin, *Thus saith the Lord, Isa. 43. 25. I, even I am he that will not remember thy sins.*

Psal. 8. 13.

Fourthly,

Fourthly, as God will graciously remit the remembrance of former sins to a returning sinner, and so *cause his iniquity to pass away*; so he *takes away* Zach. 3. *his filthy garments, and clothes him with change of raiment*, v. 22. *The Father said unto his servants, bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet.* God will not let the ensigns of a sinner, his filthy Garments remain on him: when he is humbled for sin, when a sinner is changed, God gives him change of raiment; *I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness*, Ezek. 16.8. *and thy beauty was perfect through my comeliness put upon thee*, v. 14. These mean the righteousness of Christ imputed, and the graces of his Spirit imparted to a Convert: Christ's righteousness is his upper garment, and humility, and a meek and quiet spirit, and other graces, are his inward garments. This is another eminent act of grace, which God shews to a returning sinner. 2 Pet. 3.4.
Chap. 5: 5.

Fifthly, God rejoiceth at the return of a sinner to him; *bring hither the fatted Calf, and kill it*, v. 23. *and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive*, v. 24. 5. O what wonderful condescension is this in God, that he will be merry (to speak with reverence) with a repenting sinner! which is set out by Jesus his eating with Publicans and Sinners, v. 1, 2.

We read *Exod. 32. 17.* how God was refreshed with his works of Creation, *he rested on the seventh day, and was refreshed*; and therefore he must needs be refreshed at his new Creature, being a more excellent work than the former. There are more wonders in grace than in nature.

Gen. 45.

Jacob was marvellously revived when he heard that Joseph was alive, who had been dead many years in his thoughts; *It is enough, Joseph my son is alive*: Thus saith the Father of the returning Prodigal, *Let's be merry, for this my son was dead, and is alive.*

The Scripture also tells us how joyful Jesus Christ is at the sinners conversion, *Isa. 53. 10, 11. He shall see his seed, he shall see the travel of his soul and be satisfied. Seest thou this woman*, saith Jesus to Simon the Pharisee *Luke 7. 44. This Woman, Mary Magdalen* (as some think) a great sinner, but a repenting sinner: The words of Christ are glorying words.

And so the Holy Ghost is contented to speak after the manner of men, as the Scripture doth. I say the Comforter is comforted at the repenting and returning of a sinner to God: as he is grieved and vexed at the unbelief, stubbornness, and obstinacy of sinners, *Isa. 63. 10.* so is he surely rejoyced at a poor Soul's repenting of sin, and returning from sin to God: and there is reason for it; because a sinners change is the great work of the Spirit; *a man is born again of the spirit, John 3.*

Luke 2.
Heb. 2.

Gen. 3. 24.

And further, Angels rejoice at the repentance of sinners, v. 10. of this Chapter, *There is joy in the presence of the Angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.* The Angels bear good will to mankind, since Christ took on him the nature of man. The holy Angels have great affection for converted sinners: They were at a distance from man after the fall, and are still, while men keep at a distance from God; But when a man is come home to God, now the Angels love him, and delight in him, and to do good

good for him ; *The Angel of the Lord pitcheth his Tent round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.* And are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation ? Psal. 34.
Neh. 1. 14.

And returning sinners themselves have their share in this joy, they take a part in the sweet Consort ; the fatted Calf was killed for the returning Prodigal : It is now that the poor Sinner knows that Christ was his Sacrifice, and that Christ loved him, and gave himself for him. A converted Sinner knows the Spirit of God to be the Comforter, as well as the Sanctifier. Gal. 2. 20.

God begins usually in Converts with great Sorrow, but ends with great Joy ; as a Woman in travel hath first pain and sorrow, but then joy that a man is born into the World, John 16. 21, 22. Converted Sinners have commonly at first strong Consolations ; for they come into a new World, and into new Company and Acquaintance, such as they never had afore, with God himself, and Jesus Christ, and Saints ; and *all things are new to them*, 2 Cor. 5. 17. Yet these great Joys are not lasting, though in a state of Grace ; the fatted Calf is not killed every day for them, but then especially when the Spirit of Adoption supersedes the Spirit of Bondage. It may be a Case, whether Paul presently after his Conversion had not greater Joy, than in his taking up into the third Heaven : this occasioned him great sorrow, that great joy : O ! *I was a blasphemer, and a persecutor, but I obtained mercy.* Note.
1 Tim. 1.

Christ and Joy come into the Soul together. When Jesus came in *Maries* womb towards *Elizabeth*, John leaped for joy in *Elizabeths* womb, Luke 2.

Thus you see how the returning Sinner to God is feasted ; his water is turned into wine , as at the marriage Feast, *John 2*. There is joy and mirth at Feasts, and the Company at this Feast is such as much enlargeth the joy ; not only Saints and Angels , but God himself ; *If any man open to me, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me*, Rev. 3. 20.

And therefore certainly, that repentance for sin, that bringeth not forth spiritual joy and comfort, is repentance to be repented of. God puts not a converted Sinner to sorrow for sorrows sake , but for joy and comfort, to make way for these. God would not have a repenting Sinner lie down in sorrow ; but it is the self-confident sinner, or that trusts to lying refuges, who shall do thus, *Isa. 50. 11*.

6. Sixthly and lastly, God justifieth his own actions in receiving and entertaining returning Prodigals so graciously , and with such loving kindness and mercy. The elder Son murmured , and was in a great pett, that his Father had received his Prodigal Brother into his house again, and with love of such remark, *v. 30*. of this Chapter ; *As soon as this thy son, not my brother (he disdained this) was come, that hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted Calf*. But what saith his Father to him ? he justifies what he had done, *v. 32*. *It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad ; for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again ; and was lost, and is found*.

In the beginning of the Chapter we see how the Scribes and Pharisees murmured that Jesus received Sinners, noted Sinners , and eat with them : Now Christ to convince them of their pride , and envy,
and

and self-justifying, and self-weening thoughts, and that the Publicans and Sinners, being now in the way of Conversion, was in a better condition than themselves, he spake all these three Parables, which fill up this Chapter.

God will have men to know, that he hath more kindness for self-judging and self-abasing Sinners, than for self-justifying and self-ascribing righteous men. These think they *need no Repentance*, v. 7. but those think they cannot repent enough. These *trust in themselves that they are righteous*, Luke 18. 9. those see nothing but sin in themselves; *God be merciful to me a Sinner*, v. 13. and these were words more than mouth-deep; they came from a sad heart in the deep sense of Sin. Those despise others, v. 9. these themselves; *I am not worthy to be called thy Son*. Let men say what they will, or think what they will, God will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardens, and that justly. In these mysteries he exceeds not only the common Capacities of the world, but the purest Comprehension of the Saints; *Brethren, I would not have you ignorant of this mystery*; speaking of the Lord's severe way with the Jews, and gracious and favourable way with the Gentiles. St. Paul, Paul the learned, Paul that was taken up into the third Heaven, and that had abundance of revelations, and a man of great intimacy with Christ, yet he is in a maze at these dispensations, and cries out, *O the depth of the riches; both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!*

Rom. 9.

Rom. 11.

2 Cor. 12.2.

1 Cor. 2.16.

Rom. 11.23.

Now

Note.

Now from what hath been said on this last Particular we may easily see, That it is an ill sign, when Professors of Religion carry it proudly and insultingly over poor Sinners, especially when they begin to look towards Christ. There was a great difference betwixt the carriage of Christ, and of the Pharisees and Scribes in this Case: they wonder thus, that Jesus would receive, and eat with Publicans and Sinners that followed him. And *Simon* the Pharisee, in *Luke 7.* was offended at Jesus, that he would let that woman, which had been noted for a Sinner, touch him; and the like we read of the woman in *John 8.*

Thus you have seen it cleared of all Controversie, That God doth graciously receive repenting and returning Sinners, how vile soever they have been, by these six Instances in this Parable; 1. God exceeds a returning Sinner in affection. 2. He takes notice of small beginnings of grace in a Convert. 3. He upbraids not a repenting Sinner with his former sins. 4. He takes away his filthy garments, and gives him change of raiment. 5. There is great joy in Heaven and earth at the conversion of a Sinner. 6. God justifies himself against the censures of men in all this.

CHAP.

C H A P. III.

*Giveth the Reasons of the Doctrine
in the foregoing Chapter; and the
Demonstrations of its unquestiona-
ble Truth.*

HAVING thus cleared the Doctrine, *viz.* That God doth very graciously receive returning sinners: I shall now proceed to give you the grounds and reasons hereof. And the first

Is from the Nature of God, which he calls his *Reas. 1.*
Name, Exod. 33. 19. and *his back parts, v. 19.* by which expression he means his Relative Attributes, which are his Attributes that concern us sinners: For God hath two sorts of Attributes; some that describe him what he is in himself, as *I am hath sent thee.* His Infinity, Omnipotency, Eternity, there are his two parts or face, which he calls *his glory*; and so *Moses* called them, *I beseech thee shew me thy glory, v. 18.* and of which the Lord told him, *No man can see my glory and live.* No man in the body could bear such a sight, as *Christ* said to his Disciples in another case. John 16. 12.

And then God hath Relative Attributes, which set him out what he is to us, as poor undone Sinners: these he calls his *back parts*; and these he shewed *Moses*, and made proclamation of them for all repenting Sinners to mind for their encouragement.

And

Exod. 34. 6.

And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, and forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty: all but the last are to keep from despair; but that from presumption. All these Attributes but one, are encouraging to all sorts of sinners to repent and return to God, and that one is engaging and enforcing. When Benhadad's Servants had heard that the Kings of Israel were merciful Kings, they put Sackcloth on their Loins, and Ropes upon their Heads, and say, Peradventure the King of Israel will save thy life. Why, there is no Sinner but hath heard that God is a merciful God to mournful Sinners; and the Sinner heareth not only one word of encouragement come from his mouth, but very many, and every one very inviting to a sinner to come in.

1 Kings 20.

The *Hebrews* say there are thirteen Titles in this Name of God, and but one of them vindicative; all the rest alluring to Sinners to repent, and come into God.

The Lord, the Lord God, Jehovah, Jehovah, Æl. These three Attributes may import his Essence and Subsistence in three Persons, as in 2 *John* 5. 7. *Jehovah, Jehovah*, the Lord doubles his Name for *Moses* his better notice, who it was that made this so solemn Proclamation. *Jehovah*, even *Jehovah* speaks, as in *Isaiah* 43. 25. *I, even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake.* And he adds, *The Lord, the Lord God. Æl*, that is, strong and mighty, to make good all that follows in his Name he here proclaimed; as *Moses* says

says in Num. 14. 17. *And now I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying, The Lord is long suffering, and of great mercy, &c.* Which shews plainly, that it was God himself that proclam'd his Name, and not Moses, as some have thought.

And here we may take notice, That to pardon sin is an act of power as well as grace; so saith our Lord Jesus, Matth. 9. 6. ——— *That ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins.* It follows,

Merciful. This is sutable to a Sinners misery; every Sinner being by nature *naked*, and in his blood, and cast out to the loathing of his person; and by nature the child of wrath: Now the Lord, the Lord God merciful, is a word indeed for a Sinner in misery to take hold on, as Benhadad's Servants did on the word *Brother* from the King of Israel's mouth: Yea, and God is not only merciful, but the Father of mercies, and he is so for ever; therefore it is said six and twenty times in one Psalm 136. *For his mercy endureth for ever.*

Ezek. 16.

Eph. 2. 3.

2 Cor. 1. 3.

Exod. 33. 19.

1 Cor. 1. 26.

Matth. 11. 5.

Gracious. This the Sinner, the convinced Sinner is to oppose to his own unworthiness; *I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious.* A Sinners call would not be of Grace, if there were any thing of worth in him; therefore the objects of God's Call unto grace are commonly *the foolish, and the weak, and the base, and the despised things of the world:* Go and tell John, that the poor have the Gospel preached to them: and this was amongst the wonders that Jesus did, which might convince John's doubting Disciples that he was the Christ.

Long-suffering. This may answer a repentant

E

Sin-

Isa. 30. 18.

Isa. 57. 18.

Jer. 3. 1.

Sinners fears that arise from his long withstanding the offers of grace ; *Therefore will the Lord wait that he may be gracious. — He went on frowardly in the way of his heart ; I have seen his ways, and will heal him. Thou hast played the Harlot with many lovers, yet return again to me saith the Lord.*

Rom. 12.

Abundant in goodnesß. Therefore can he overcome all the evil of a Sinner : He enables his people to overcome evil with good ; much more can, and will he do it himself.

Psalm 100.

And abundant in truth. This may answer all thy doubts about God's promises to receive returning Sinners : He often eminently asserts his truth in his Promises ; — *his truth endureth from generation to generation.* There have been famous proofs of the truth of God's Promises to such Sinners in all Ages ; the Lord may say to all converted Sinners, *Ye are my witnesses — Isa. 43. 10.*

Isa. 55. 7.

Isa. 1.

Pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin. This is to prevent despair that might rise from the multitude of sins and magnitude of sins. *Let the wicked turn to our God, for he will abundantly pardon ;* Hebr. he will multiply to pardon. *Put away the evil of your doings, and then, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wooll.* Scarlet and Crimson are colours of a deep die, nothing can thorowly wash them out ; Yes, *but the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth from all sin ;* even sins that have the most hellish and devilish tincture. The wooll of those Countries was exceeding white ; *Psalm 147. 16. He giveth snow-like wooll ;* pure wooll, as it was said of the hair

1 John 2. 7.

Dan. 7. 9.]

hair of the head of the Ancient of days, described there not in his Essence, but in his Presence. The expressions import, That God hath a white Stone (an Emblem of Absolution or Pardon; a custome among the Heathens) to give to the chief of Sinners, when repenting and returning to him.

Ovid. Metam.
lib. 15.

Keeping mercy for thousands. God is an unexhausted fountain of mercy; and therefore *mercy rejoiceth or glorieth against judgment*; as if there were a strife between Mercy and Judgment about sinners, and Mercy gets the victory: says the Prophet *Micah*, *He delighteth in mercy.* Mercy is as pleasing to God as to the Sinner. As the motion, which the woman of Tekoa made to David for Absalom's return from banishment, was as pleasing to David as to Joab, who had a hand in it; it's said, *Joab perceived that the King's heart was towards Absalom.*

James 2. 13.

Mic. 7. 18.

2 Sam. 14. 1.

Lastly, *And that will by no means clear the guilty: i. e.* That shall be guilty of despising and abusing the former Attributes of God in this his Name, inviting Sinners to come in to him. When a Sinner comes to be contumacious and stubborn, and a presumptuous Sinner, then he is past mercy. As it is with some Felons, that are not allowed the Clergy: so it is with presumptuous Sinners, there was no Sacrifice in the Law for them.

The Soul that doth thought presumptuously, or with a high hand, the same reproacheth the Lord, and that Soul shall be cut off from among his people. So in Deuteronomy, *If a man bleß himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace though I walk in the imagination or stubbornness of mine heart—*

Num. 15. 30.

Deut. 29. 19, 20.

The Lord will not spare him, his anger and his jealousy

jealousie shall smooke against that man, and all the Curses that are written in this Book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under Heaven.

So that this last Clause of God's Name, *And will by no means clear the guilty*, is terrible indeed; but it's so only to the presumptuous and stubborn sinner; and it's enough to make such a sinner *Magor-missabib*, or fear round about, a terror to himself. But this part of God's Name takes not place, till all the former are rejected and despised. This, *and by no means will clear the guilty*, belongs not to those that acknowledge themselves to be guilty, and carry it accordingly. And this is the first Reason why God doth, and will so graciously receive self-humbling and repenting sinners, Because it is in his Nature to deal so with such.

Reas. 2.

1 Pet. 3. 18.

Luke 2. 14.

A second Ground or Reason of it is from the Son of God's espousing the nature of man, and that after the fall of man, on purpose to bring back lost man unto God. *Christ hath once suffered for sins; i. e.* in the sinners nature, that he might bring us to God, bring God and sinners together again, that he might reconcile and make them friends. When Jesus Christ took on him actually the Seed of Abraham, then the Angels sung *on earth peace, good will towards men.*

And indeed if God should not entertain returning sinners, and again take them into friendship, then did Christ take on him their nature in vain, and die in their nature in vain, and then is our preaching in vain, and your faith in vain, 2 Cor. 15.

It is to no purpose for a sinner to think of addressing himself to an absolute God; there can be no intercourse between God and him without Christ: Christ is the middle person that perswades with both. This is Christ's office and great work, to bring God and sinners together. 1 Pet. 3. 18.

There are great differences between them, that cannot without him be taken up; but Christ can take up all: He brings Publicans and Harlots home to God; *He preached peace to you that were afar off, as well as to them that were nigh*, Eph. 2. 17. Neither Moses, nor Samuel, nor Noah, nor Daniel, nor Job, might turn God's mind to the Jews, Jer. 15. 1. Ezek. 14. 14. I but Jesus Christ hath turned the mind of God towards the greatest of returning Sinners; *Ye who were sometimes alienated, and enemies in your minds by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled unto God*, Col. 1. 21.

Now considering how the work of Redemption was wrought in our Nature, and God is manifested in the Flesh on purpose to be a Redeemer; that our Nature in him might be meritorious, and savable in us; that God was manifested in the flesh to satisfy God offended by us; God was offended, and God was satisfied by God in the offenders Nature: How that the Scripture saith, *The Father hath sent forth his Son to be a propitiation for the remission of sins; and the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost*, Luke 19. 10. I say, these things considered, are a second Demonstration of the willingness of God to receive returning Sinners.

The Covenant of Grace shews, that God doth verily intend to be gracious to sinners. Had God continued the old Covenant of Works, or made a new Covenant. Reas. 3.

Covenant of Works, poor sinners had been where they were, because of their incapacity to perform the Conditions of such a Covenant: But the Covenant being altered into a Covenant of Grace, the terms are not, I will, if they will; but I will, and they shall; *I will put my spirit within you, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them.* God undertakes for himself and us.

Ezek. 36.27.

And it is notably evident in the Scripture, that the great design of God in the Covenant of Grace was, and is, to advance the glory of his grace, his free grace, and that upon objects unlikeliest to natural Reason. The Gospel is made up of acts of grace; 2 Cor. 2. 26. — *You see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise—that no flesh should glory in his presence—The good pleasure of his will is his motive, and the praise of the glory of his grace is his end, in all his merciful actings towards sinners, Eph. 1. 5, 6.*

Reas. 4.

God is gracious to repenting and returning sinners, because he will be true to his word, and make good his promises to this purpose. Isa. 1. 16. *Wash ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings—Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow—*

The import of the Phrase is, That upon repentance they should have remission of sins, though they had been sinners of the greatest sort: And which is to be noted, God hath designed the Lord Jesus Christ to give repentance as well as remission of sins, Acts 5. 32:

The

The holy Scriptures are full of promises and offers to poor Sinners, highly engaging to repentance for sin, and from sin; *Isa. 55. 7. Let the wicked forsake his way—— and turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and he will abundantly pardon him.* That of the Apostle *Rom. 5. 20.* answers this of the Prophet, *Where sin abounded; grace did much more abound.* And *Jer. 3. 1. Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers, yet return again to me, saith the Lord. And come unto me, saith Jesus to Sinners labouring under the sense of sin, Matth. 11. 28. and I will give you rest.* Come unto me, and I will not bind heavy burthens, and grievous to be born, as the Scribes and Pharisees do, *Matth. 23. 4.* but i'll take off their burthens, and i'll give you a light burthen; *My yoke is easie, and my burthen is light, v. 30.* Come unto me, for him that cometh to me I *Joh. 6. 37.* will in no wise cast out. Whom the Pharisees had cast out, Christ received, *John 9.* And it's to be observed, That Jesus Christ is said to have a Commission from his Father thus to treat sinners; as he said *John 12. 49. The Father gave me a commandment what I should say——* And so the Apostle Paul tells the *Corinthians*, That he and the other Apostles had Commission both from the Father and Son, to treat Sinners with the most winning offers, *2 Cor. 5. 20. Now then we are Embassadors for Christ; as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.*

And now for a Sinner to question whether God can forgive such sins as his, it is almost to act over Cain's part, *Mine iniquity is greater than can be forgiven. Gen. 4.* And if a Sinner question whether God will forgive him, and receive him upon his return, this is to question

Heb. 6. 18.

Reas. 5.

tion truth it self, and his promises, for whom it is impossible to lie.

The last Ground I shall mention of the Doctrine, is the Presidents which are upon Record by the holy Ghost in the Case; as *Adam* that filled the World with sin; and *Manasseth* that filled *Jerusalem* with blood; yet these were pardoned Sinners upon their repentance and return to God.

There is a great deal of mercy in setting down the patterns of mercy in great Sinners: St. *Paul* saith as much of himself, and his own Case: *1 Tim. 1. 13, 16. Who was a blasphemer, and a persecuter, and injurious, but I obtained mercy: And for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me Jesus Christ might shew forth all long suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe.*

It is true, *Paul* saith in *v. 13.* though he had been a blasphemer, and a persecuter, yet he obtained mercy, because he did it ignorantly in unbelief: But this he says to shew that his blasphemy and persecution was not the sin against the holy Ghost, else he could not have obtained mercy: He acted out of his blind zeal, and not against knowledge, and of meer malice, as many of the Pharisees, and some of the Rulers did, *Matth. 12. 24.* Some, not all; St. *Peter* clears some, *Acts 3. 17.* — *I wot that through ignorance ye did it, that is, put Christ to death, as did also your Rulers.*

CHAP.

C H A P. IV.

Wherein Application is made of the foregoing Doctrine, in two Uses.

HAVING given you the Reasons of the Doctrine, and the Demonstrations of its undoubted truth, I shall next proceed to apply it.

And it may serve for Exhortation to all manner of *Use* I. sinners upon return, or not upon return to God; O take heed of sin with impenitency and unbelief: If you die in your sins, it will lie upon your selves; God will clear himself, that he removed blocks out of your way, and answered all your Objections.

You say, you dare not come into God's sight, because you have been such vile sinners: But this is with *Cain* to go out of the presence of the Lord, *Gen.* 4. which was both his sin and judgment. It is at best sinful modesty for sinners to say so, or think so; but it is ordinarily rather the pride of their heart, than poverty of spirit. Despairing sinners are taught of the Devil to say and think *their iniquity is greater then can*, or that it may *be forgiven*. This is one of Satan's *voluptates*, his Sophistical reasonings; he would have had the sorrowful incestuous person to have been *swallowed up of over-much sorrow*, *v. 7*. Satan prevails upon many troubled Consciences, to think every one doth but flatter them, that seeks to take them off from their despairing reasonings.

Some sinners are so critical in their coming to God, that God may say to them in this point, as he did to *Ephraim* and *Judah* in another, *Hos. 6. 4. O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee?* Some would be humbled above God's measure, before they will come to him; and some under: Some would come to God with their sins, and some with hell in their souls: And thus who knows how many are damned by their own proud will, or wild humor. When a sinner is come to himself, and feels he is lost, and come out of himself, as to any succour there, now is the sinners time to come to God in Christ, or come unto God by Christ; and when he comes, God will fall on his neck, and kiss him, as the Father on his prodigal returning Son; he is sure of welcome, if he now return.

Heb. 7. 25.

It matters not out of what Countrey thou comest; how far distant thou hast been from God; though thou hast kept Swine as the Prodigal did; been the Devil's drudge; been a drunkard, a swearer, a very vicious person; hast sinned such sins as the Devil himself sins not, yet hath tempted thee to sin, and thy base nature joyned with him in the temptation; yet still I say, if thou returnest to God, he'll receive thee; yet remember his words to *Israel*, *Psalms 95. To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart*: for as the Apostle to the *Hebrews* saith, *he limiteth a certain day.*

Heb. 4. 7.

O quash not motions, no not this days motions to return to God; the Devil may discourage thee from them, but God will not. When the Shepherd found his lost sheep, he did not throw his hook at it; but laid it on his shoulder, and brought it home: when God meets with a returning sinner, he doth not speak

in

in passion and wrath to him, as *Ahab* did to *Elijah*, *Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?* but as tenderly as *Jesus* did to *Peter* the first time he met him after he denied him.

And though a sinner have not legs of his own to return; yet if there be a mind to it, as there was in the impotent man to go into the Pool, he shall go upon the legs of God's grace, as that impotent man did: God hath *laid help on one that is mighty*, even *Jesus the great Shepherd of the sheep*. He is *come to seek and to save that which is lost*. John 5.
Heb. 13. 20.
Luke 19. 10.

O then let the gracious dealing of God with this Prodigal invite thee, who art yet at a distance from God, now to return: This is much in God's mouth; *Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die? Ez. 33. 11. Yet return again unto me, saith the Lord*. Such mercy and pity as this should be a Loadstone to thy heart; thy heart should be broken or melted, as that sinful womans was, in the thoughts of the possibility of being pardoned and accepted of God. No sinning Angels sure had such mercy as this; O despise not such mercy, neglect not so free salvation. Jer. 3. 2.
Luke 7.

But do you preach mercy to impenitent and hardened sinners? *Quest.* *Ans.* Yes, inviting mercy; Christ himself did so; he *came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance*: Indeed he calls them to mercy by the way of repentance; *Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*: the invitation is to the worst of sinners, sensible of sin as a burthen. It is true, there is no mercy for any sinner without repentance, and there is mercy for great sinners with it. A sinner must come to himself before he come to God, as the Prodigal did before he came to his Father, *v. 17*. *Quest.*
Ans.
Matth. 11. 28.

As for measures of conviction and humiliation, take heed of the Devil's trap and snare here : Now thou art off of the danger of presumption, he plays his game of despair ; but let this over-rule the Case, when it comes to be thine , That he hath the happiest measure of conviction and humiliation for sin, whose conviction and humiliation brings him out of himself to Christ.

But sense of sin, and sorrow for sin there must be: If the Prodigal had not come to himself, when pinched with want, and thought his Father's house, and any service there, a better condition than the far Countrey; his Father had not had compassion on him. If any sinner will still be what he is, and do not repent, that he may return, he hath nothing to do with those parts of God's Name, *Merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin ;* but that close of God's Name, *And will by no means clear the guilty.*

For what would sinners have of God ? to be saved in their sins ? It's not possible ; God sent his Son Jesus *to save his people from their sins, and to turn them from their iniquity, Acts 3.26.* If God should save a sinner in his sins, this is mercy that would overthrow his truth and justice : God will stand to his word, and receive thee graciously if thou repentest and returnest; but withal he must stand to his word, and save thee in a Scripture way , and in a way agreeable to all his Attributes , which is by the way of repentance and returning to him. When sinners cannot rest in a state of sin, nor in a state of self-righteousness, but they see they must come to Christ for rest, he will bid these sinners welcome.

Math. 2. 21.

Quest.

Quest. But is it in a convinced sinners power to return to God? The Scripture saith, *The way of man is not in himself*; nor is it in man that walketh to direct his own steps. I Answer, That though the act of a sinners returning be in God's power, and not his own; as it's said of times and seasons, *Acts 1.* yet the sinner may seek it of God; *Turn thou me, O Lord, and I shall be turned, said Ephraim, Jer. 31. 18.* Though it be God's work, yet he works it in the way of means, which sinners may and must use.

And that a sinner does not return to God, it lies not so much in his Cannot, as in his Will not: They refuse to return.

Object. I but God hears not sinners; to what purpose is it then for such to pray that God will turn them? *Ans.* It's true for sinners that do, and would live in sin, God regards not their prayers: But if thou comest to God affected with thy sinful state, God will regard thy prayers, though thou art not yet in a state of grace: It was *Manasseh* his case, and is indeed the case of most Converts: There are some things in those that are not yet converted, that are in order to their Conversion. Thy sense of thy distance from God, and desire of a return, why this is a less grace that makes way for a greater. This in answer to that Objection.

O then, if the power of returning to God be in God's hand, sit not still, but seek it there. When all the Corn in *Egypt* was in *Joseph's* Garners, should a poor Egyptian say, He had none, I have none; *Joseph* hath all at his disposing, so that I may sit still and starve? No; but therefore I'll go where it is to be had. This is thy case who wouldst return to God,

God, but hast not power ; Resolve, I'll go to him that has.

Object. I, but I am not certain that God will part with power of returning to me ; *He hardens whom he will, Rom. 9. 18.* leaves to their hardness of heart, and so to their impotency and weakness. *Ans.* But this is one of the Devil's suggestions to poor sinners, who have but the thoughts of returning to God ; and so let such look on it.

2 Kings 7. Why will not you do in this case, as the Lepers did in theirs ? *If we sit still we die, if we go in to the Syrians we shall but die, it may be they may save us alive :* and dare not you venture your souls on God, as well as those Lepers their lives on the Syrians.

Johah 3. 9. *Nineveh* fell to prayer and fasting as well as they could, to prevent being destroyed, after sentence was pronounced upon them ; And what was their encouragement ? *It may be, or who knoweth, or who can tell, if the Lord will turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not ?*

Now there is no sinner, that hath a mind to return to God, but he hath as much encouragement to beg grace of him to return.

Suppose there were but a possibility of thy returning to God in the use of God's means for it, why this is a mercy that the Angels which sinned never had since they sinned ; they have no possibility of making peace with God : I but thou hast more than a possibility ; there is probability to encourage thee. A sinner is in a probable way, whilst he seeks grace in the means of grace, as the impotent man was of Cure, while he lay by the Pool, *John 5.* And above this, though God be free in dealing forth his grace ;
and

and hath mercy on whom he will have mercy ; and is gracious to whom he will be gracious, *Exod. 33. 19.* yet God hath left thee good assurance, if thou keep in the way of his instituted means for the conversion of sinners; *Ask and ye shall have, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you, Mark 7. 7.* *I said not to the seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain, Isa. 49. 19.*

So that although the sense of thy lost condition, which is coming to thy self, as this Prodigal did; and thy thoughts and mindfulness of thy return to God, like the Prodigal to his Father; I say, though these be not thy return, yet they are in order to it; this is, as I said, less grace, to make way for greater. They are those that like their distance from God in their state of sin, that are likely to perish in that state; *This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, John 3. 19.*

But if God have given thee the will to return to him, he will give thee to do it; and in thy return thou wilt be graciously received, as the repenting, returning Prodigal was by his Father; for he was the representation of sinners in the case.

Secondly, If God will graciously receive a re-*Use 2.* penting and returning sinner, then surely he will do so by a returning Saint: Saints are subject to relapses and backslidings; the promise of Cure supposes the Distemper: *I will heal their backslidings:* the like in *Jer. 3. 12.* *Return thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon thee; for I am merciful saith the Lord, and will not keep anger for ever; only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast scattered thy ways to strangers*—*Nav.*

Nay, above this, relapsing Saints have not only a promise of a gracious reception upon their return; but they have a promise, that they shall return to their vigour in grace; *He went on frowardly in the way of his heart; I have seen his ways, and will heal him.* *Peter* rose from his fall presently; at a look of *Jesus* he got up again. And it is notable what tender care our Lord *Jesus* took so soon as he was risen, that *Peter* should be comforted in his sorrow for his fall, lest he should be swallowed up of overmuch sorrow, which is a design of Satan; in the case, 2 *Cor.* 2. 11.

And therefore Christ dispatched an Angel to *Peter*, to acquaint him with his being risen again. And *Jesus* himself appeared to *Peter* first of all the Disciples, when he was risen from the dead.

But my Brethren, I beseech you consider this, That it is better to prevent a disease, than to be healed of it: for the prevention of relapses prevents much pain and grief of Soul. O then let Christians be watchful to prevent distances between God and them; and you that have made such, in leaving your first Love, and have receded from the kindness of your youth, and have abated of your former humble and close walking with God, your former delight and power in prayer——O bethink your selves of coming to your selves, and of your returning to God, in holy and humble converse with him.

Till then your bones continue out of joint, as *David's* were, and the pain in setting them is to come; and though they be set, yet you may halt of them ever after, as *Jacob* did upon the blow the Angel gave him on his thigh; yet
this

Jer. 57. 17, 18.

Luke 22. 61.

Mark 16.

2 Cor. 15. 5.

Rev. 2. 4.

Jer. 2. 2.

Psal. 22. 14.

Gen. 32.

this is better than not to return to your former lively and active state in grace.

O therefore, ye backsliding Christians, resolve as she did *Hos. 2. 7. I will go and return to my first husband, for then it was better with me than now*: and your returning must be with melting hearts; *They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them.* Backsliding Christians should grieve and trouble more at their parting with God, than *Micah* did, when his Idols were taken away; *Ye have taken away my Gods, and what have I more?* take heed of parting with God. And thus much for the general Scope and Doctrine of the Parable, viz. That God doth very graciously receive returning sinners. Judg. 18. 24.

C H A P. V.

Proceedeth to the two general Doctrines resulting from the first part of the Parable : particularly shewing, The natural and lusting desire that is in man to forsake God ; and the Reasons hereof.

Verses the 12, 13, 14, 15, 16.

And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.

And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far Countrey, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in the land, and he began to be in want. And he went and joyned himself to a citizen of that countrey, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

And

And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat : and no man gave unto him.

I Have done with the general Scope and Doctrine of this quick and lively Parable, as *Luther* calls those of this Chapter : I now come to speak particularly of the three Persons which act their distinct parts in this Parable, the Father and his two Sons.

And our Saviour first holds forth to our view and consideration, the younger Son, a Prodigal ; and the Picture of every natural man.

And first, we have his proud and peremptory Request, or rather Demand, of his Father ; *Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me :* He would have his Father make his Will, and be his own Executor in his life ; yea presently.

There are two things observable in this youngster:

1. He would have his Portion in his own hand, and be at his own finding ; he would cast off his Father, and be independent : A strange thing ! Fathers sometimes cast off their Sons ; but here the Son casts off the Father, and will give no account of any thing he has or does : He gets his Portion into his own hand, and then goes *into a far Countrey, v. 12.* and part of the 13th.

2. This proud and heady Course of his was the cause of all his ensuing woes and misery : For hereupon followed, 1. His Luxury, *v. 13. And there wasted his substance with riotous living.* 2. His Calamity followed his Luxury at the heels, *v. 14. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in the land, and he began to be in want.* He

satisfied his lusts, until he had nothing left to satisfy Nature.

And these two literal things in the Parable yield us these two spiritual Points of Doctrine, intended by him who spake the Parable.

Doct. 1.

That every man by nature hath a lusting desire to leave God, and live at his own hand; he would stand on his own legs and bottom, and be at his own dispose: Thus it is with every man by Nature.

Doct. 2.

This leaving of God, and walking after their own lusts, is the reason of mens sad estate both for sin and sorrow.

1. That every man by nature hath a lusting desire to leave God, and live at his own hand, and be at his own dispose: Thus it is with us all by nature; for this Prodigal Son is the picture of every natural man; and this is naturally mans proper inclination and tendency.

Here man lost his state of innocency, he waved God and his innocency together; and which, 'tis possible, he kept but a few hours; I cannot say days, as some do.

And this lust of his to leave God, and provide better for himself, as he thought, than did God, broke forth at a short temptation; Satan soon got his ear and heart to this cursed way, to cast off God, and to be as God himself; he sought to be an independent being; in plain terms, to be no more a Creature; — *Ye shall be as Gods*: He took off his heart from God, to be a God himself. And man left God at first on a double account or reason.

Gen. 3. 5.

1. Upon

1. Upon a dislike of his estate, though a large and lovely one, a goodly heritage, as *David* said *Psal. 16.* of his. He had hard thoughts of God, because he had put a restraint upon him from eating of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil; he received a conceit that God kept him too much under, the Devil's own sin, who in dislike left his first estate, *Jude 6.* out of an aspiring mind to a higher estate than an Angels. So that man's first conception of sin lay in high thoughts of himself, and hard thoughts of God; and the nature of man hath taken the infection, and is apt to have high conceits of self, and hard conceits of God, as that King had *2 Kings 6. 33.* *This evil is of the Lord, what should I wait for the Lord any longer?* And that Servant of his Lord, who intrusted him but with one talent, *I Matth. 25.* *knew thou wast a hard Man.*

2. Man at first left God upon point of fear; he puts God into an ill shape, and then durst not come near him. Adam *hid himself from the presence of the Lord*; and when he was asked why, *I heard thy voice, says he, and was afraid.* So that you plainly see how man cast off God betimes; gets himself, as he thought, from under God's government, and will have his own way: And this grievous distemper infects the whole blood; it is an hereditary and epidemical dyscrasy and disease of mankind; it is even in the godly themselves, so far as grace does not overpower it.

Pharaoh was an eminent instance in the case, *Exod. 5. 2.* *Who is the Lord that I should obey him?* High language that layeth God low: as *Nabal* said of *David* in a despising way, *Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse?* so said *Pharaoh* of God, *Who*

Who is the Lord, that I—— The like language we read of, *Job 21. 14. They say unto God depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways:* and this is the voice of every natural man's heart, though it break not out at his lips; *The fool hath said in his heart there is no God;* so he would have it.

It is God's restraining grace that keeps the world of natural men from this Atheism; as he said to *Abimelech, I withheld thee from sinning against me.* Restraining grace is an awe that God keeps upon mens Consciences, which makes them forbear some sins, though they do not hate the sins. *Judea* had an adulterous heart, though God hedg'd up her way with thorns.

Man would be at liberty from God and his Will, to follow and fulfill his own; *Man is born like a wild Asses Colt;* vain man is so, saith *Zophar*. He hath a *principium lesus*, a devillish principle in his nature; an impulse to range about the earth, as *Satan* said of himself; his lust would know no bounds, and so indeed he would be a God to himself. *Moses* was instead of God to *Aaron*, *Exod. 4. 16.* but that was to discover the mind of God to him; for *Aaron* had not that familiarity and intimacy with God as *Moses* had; *The Lord spake to Moses face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend;* that is, most familiarly, as he did to none of the Prophets after.

But natural men would be as Gods to themselves; *Our lips are our own, who is Lord over us.* My Brethren, whilst we seek to please our selves, and to be self-depending, what is this less then to seek to be as Gods? this was it that man sought for at the be-

beginning ; *God knows ye shall be as Gods*, saith the Gen. 3. 5. Serpent when he tempted *Eve*, and she soon nibbled at this bait.

When men are and will be their own motives and ends, they are as Gods unto themselves. Carnal Ezek. 14. 3. men make many Gods, they set up Idols in their hearts ; and as they make Gods to themselves, so they make themselves their chief God : as it was said of *Antiochus Epiphanes*, the notorious Grecian Monarch, called by Divines a Type of Antichrist, and by a famous Historian *Epimanes*, a mad Dan. 11. 36. man ; of him it is said in the Prophet *Daniel*, *That he would exalt himself, and magnifie himself above every God.* Polybeus.

Indeed men cannot but own themselves Creatures, in asking and receiving, as the Prodigal here, *Father give me my portion* : but then they are, or would be Gods in using what they receive ; for let them receive wealth, or beauty, or strength, or honor, or parts, *they consume them upon their lusts.* And this James 4. 3. way a man makes a God of himself, his own humour and lust is his end in all. Nay, and in some respects men would be as Gods in receiving ; for they would have to the uttermost of their minds and phantasies. Our first Parents would have had more than God gave them, though he gave them all this lower world, and much of the world above too ; his own image and likeness, and near communion with himself, and power to have kept this blessed state ; yet they thought not this enough, it sufficed them not, but they would be as Gods.

And still men would live, and do live, as *without God in the world*, as the Apostle saith. Eph. 2. 12. And this is one Reason, and a chief one, why natural men refuse.

Marth. 19.

refuse grace, because grace layeth man low, and raises God high: grace casts man out of himself, and prompts him to self-denial, which he cannot bear: That young, rich, great man, could not part with self for Christ.

The Reasons of the Doctrine.

Reas. 1.

Gen 49.4.

Jer. 2.36.

Dan. 7.25.

Isa. 24.5.

Ezek. 5.6.

Jer. 2. 11.

Plin.

Acts 17. 21.

Judg. 5.8.

The first is from man's instability and mutableness; he is, as *Jacob* said of *Reuben*, *unstable as water*: Man is a Creature given to change; *why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way?* man would change every thing. That King, that came after the ten in *Daniel*, changed *times and laws*. The Lord complained of the Jews, that they had changed the *Ordinance*, and had changed his *Judgments*.

Yea, they changed their God: *Hath a Nation changed their Gods? but my people have changed their glory*. Man by nature is a Novatian, as the Philosopher said, *Est natura hominum novitatis avida*, man is for some new thing: He has an itch this way, as it's said of the Athenians, that they spent their time in nothing, but either *to tell or to hear some new thing*: And of *Israel* it is said, *they chose new Gods*.

Man naturally loves change of states and conditions, as feaverish palates do change of beer, and it may be none will please. This Prodigal liked not to live with his Father, nor near home; he must go into a far Countrey. It may in some sort be said of every natural mans heart, as of *Nebuchadnezzars*, *a beasts heart was given unto him*. Man would have change of pasture, as some beasts will not stay where

Dan. 4.16.

where they are put, but break and leap Hedges to get into new grounds. Not only many of the Angels *left their first estate*, but all men in the first man *left theirs*; Man still wants something. *Amnon*, though a King's Son, yet was as if he wanted all, *2 Sam. 13.* while he wanted his Lust of *Tamar*.

And *Haman*, when he had the greatest favour, honour, and estate of a Subject, yet he wanted *Mordecai's* knee.

Man is very much a dissatisfied and discontented Creature, till grace comes, and much grace: It was much grace that brought *St. Paul* to so contented a mind. *Phil. 2.* And this is one Reason why naturally man would be loose from God, and left to himself, because he is so uncertain and unstable a Creature.

A second Reason of the Doctrine is from the ignorance that is in all natural men; this makes them to leave God, and live on self. *Reas. 2.*

First, a natural man's ignorance of himself; he knows not, or considers not, what it is to be a Creature, so weak a Creature as himself is; for if he did, he would not trust so much, as its plain he doth, to his own strength; strength of parts, or strength of purposes, or strength of phantasie: vain man would be wise, *i. e.* in his own thoughts, in contriving his own happiness, though *man be born like a wild Asses colt*, but little differing from a brute; he is like the beast, *---like the beasts that perish.* How *Psal. 49. 12, 20.* could the hop stand without the pole, or the vine without the wall? And yet man thinks he could live without God, and in a fort does. *Eph. 2. 12.*

H

If

Rom. I. 22.

If holy men think themselves, at least sometimes, not to have *the understanding of a man*, as *Hagar*, Prov. 30. 2. *but foolish and ignorant as a beast*, as *Asaph*, Psal. 73. 22. What is the natural man's wisdom? the Apostle saith, Their wisdom makes them fools; *professing themselves to be wise, they became fools*. The wisest of meer natural men, and the learnedst, know not enough what it is to be Creatures, and through this ignorance would be as Gods.

2 Cor. 6.

2 Cor. 10. 31.

For what is it to be a Creature? not to be of ourselves, or to our selves, not to be our own; *Ye are not your own*, saith St. Paul to the *Corinthians*; and so *whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God*. And therefore when men would live of themselves, and to themselves, they would live above the capacity of Creatures.

Ezek. 28. 2.

Acts 12. 22.

Some great men, through this ignorance of themselves, have aspired to be Gods over other men: So did the Prince of *Tyrus*, *Thou hast said I am a God, I sit in the seat of God*: And *Herod* was well pleased when the people cried him up for a God. And *Alexander* the Great could scarce be content to be a man; and every man that hath not grace enough to make him the more humble and modest (for as grace is given to the humble, so grace maketh humble) every man would be as God to himself; he would please himself, and live to himself; he would be his own rule, and his own end, and serve his own turn on God as well as men.

Rom. 11. 36.

Now, I say, this is because men naturally are ignorant of what it is to be a Creature; what it is to be of another, and for another; even of God, and for God; *of him, and through him, and to him are all*

all things. The Lord hath made all things for himself. The wheel spins not for it self, but for him that made it, and him that bought it : and so the Ax cuts not for it self. By living of, or to our selves, we do, as far as we can, overthrow our being Creatures : and men consider not the evil of offering to sit in the seat of God. Prov. 16. 4.

Suppose other Creatures should be to themselves, should be proud towards us, as we are prone to be towards God, and should refuse to do our service and work, as we too often do by God, we would think it a strange *ataxie*, and the course of nature to be quite inverted ; we should say as *Ptolomy* of the great and unexpected Eclipse at Christ's death, *Deus naturæ patitur* ; the God of Nature suffereth ; this is the spirit of a man towards God, wherever there is not grace, and so much grace to teach us better. Though he made us, yet we have an itch to be our own, to serve our own turn, and not his ; and in doing so, we seek so much as in us lyeth, to alter our selves from the condition of Creatures.

Secondly, Our ignorance of God makes us to turn our back upon him ; men see not a sufficiency of good in God, and so they look for it elsewhere. God is an unknown God to the most of men ; and though they profess him, yet that may be written on their Profession, which was upon the Altar that *St. Paul* saw at *Athens*, *To the unknown God* : Many men phansie God to be like themselves. Through deceit they refuse to know me, saith the Lord, *Isa. 9. 6.* and every man is brutish in his knowledge, *Jer. 10. 14.* Acts 17. 23.
Psalm 50. 21.

Psal. 9. 10.

Jer. 24. 7.

What is the reason that the Saints depend on God, and dare not scatter their trust to Creatures? because they know him, and have acquaintance with him; *They that know thy Name will put their trust in thee*: God gives them a heart to know him: and this was the reason why *Pharaoh* would be his own Lord, *I know not the Lord*, *Exod. 5. 7*. Because men know not the Lord so, as to know that their happiness is bound up in him, as *Judah* said, that *his fathers life was in the lads life*, *Gen. 44. 30*. Therefore men leave God, and rely on themselves, or some other Creature; *She did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oyl, and multiplied her silver and gold, wherewith they made Baal*; so these last words are in the *Margin*, *Hos. 2. 8*.

There is a natural instinct in all men to desire to be happy, but where this Golden vein lyes, every man by nature is to seek; men are scepticks or seekers indeed in this; but miss as much, or more than they that make experiment of the Philosophers Stone.

The wisest men of this world have abounded in their conjectures of it; there have been fourscore, some say a hundred, of distinct opinions in the case, *viz.* wherein true happiness lieth, and all have been mistaken: For it is to be observed, they have all seated the *Summum bonum*, man's chief good, in the Creatures, and not in God.

Psal. 73. 25.

But grace teacheth us to find it in God, and in God alone, in the enjoyment of God himself; *Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee.*

Solomon

Solomon, who might better be called Nature's Secretary than *Aristotle*, ransack'd the whole Creation, *all things under the Sun* for it, but found it not; only *vanity and vexation of spirit* instead of it.

Every Creature answered *Solomon*, when he sought felicity in them, as the Depths and the Sea answer men who seek wisdom in them, *It is not in me*, nor it is *not in me*. Men set up false marks, when they aim at contentation and satisfaction in any creature excellency; so that if they do hit the mark they aim at, they hit a false mark. Suppose a man aim to be happy in riches, or honour, or pleasures, or moral virtues, or parts, or humane learning, and suppose he hit the mark he aims at for happiness; why he hits a false mark, and so is as far from true happiness as before he took his aim.

The enjoyment of all these, laid to the enjoyment of God himself, are but as *Esau's* Pottage to the Blessing or Birthright; *Men lay out their strength for that which satisfieth not, and their money for that which is not bread*, who hunt for happiness in the Creature: They are like a man sick of a Fever, O if he had but drink, how well should he be! but this is the cry of his Distemper; for give him drink to his mind, and it does but feed his Disease, not satisfy Nature, but disturb it more.

It's considerable what the Lord saith in this case, *Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, nor the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, &c.* Acquaintance with God is more to a man's peace and composure of mind than all the former; Ac-
quaint

Job. 12. 21.

Acquaint now thy self with him, and be at peace : thereby good shall come unto thee.

Psal. 104. 34.

Psal. 16. 5, 6.

It is true, we may seek comfort in the Creature, and find it; yet it's imperfect comfort; it's comfort but in part: As we know here but in part. We may look for light from the Moon, and have it; but we may not think to find the light of the Sun in the Moon. And as great a difference there is between the Joy we may have in the Creature, and that we may have in God; *My meditation of him shall be sweet.* When David said, *The Lord is the portion of mine Inheritance*; he adds, *the lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places.*

Josh. 15. 19.

What vertue God hath put into the Creature, we may seek it; but when we find it, it is to mind us of much more to be found in God: God intends not that the comfort we find in any of the Creatures should draw our hearts from him, but to him, and more to him than before: *Caleb's* daughter must have the upper springs with the neather in her blessing. In a word, we must seek God in the Creature, as *Jacob* saw God in *Esau's* face, and seek the Creature for God, as well as our selves, or else we mistake the way to true comfort and content in both, which method no natural man observeth. And thus much for the second Reason of the point.

Reas. 3.

Job 42. 3

Psal. 10. 4.

A third Reason is the pride of man; man's pride makes him turn his back upon God, and think to stand by himself: Man is naturally a proud Creature, as the sinning Angels were; man is among the children of pride; *The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God; God is not in all his thoughts.*

What

What is pride but an opinion of a man's self-sufficiency and self-excellency? as we see in that proud Pharisee, *I am not as other men, nor as this Publican*: and in those proud superstitious Jews, who said to others, *Stand by thyself, come not near to me, for I am holier than thou*: This is the dialect and language of pride; it is the vent of tow'ring thoughts of a man's self: You may more easily pull down the strongest Castle, than the proud heart of man. Pharaoh was long plagued before he would own God; *Who is the Lord, that I should obey his Voice?* This was the Leaven which first sowed man's heart in his fall, *We shall be as Gods*, Gen. 3. and ever since natural man would be some great one, as Simon Magus gave out himself to be. Luke 18. Isa. 65. 5. Exod. 5. Acts 8. 9.

Man is not easily made nothing in his own thoughts; he very hardly owns his need and want in spirituals: *I am rich, and want nothing*, was the brag of the Laodiceans. Now as God beholds the proud afar off; Psal. 138. so the proud heart of men by nature keeps afar off from God; *They say unto God, depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways*. Rev. 3. 17. Job 21. 14.

The pride of man's heart hath a hand in those two soul-undoing sins, that keep men off from God, Presumption and Despair. Presumers, through the pride of their countenance, will not seek after God: and Despairers will see some worth in themselves before they will go to God. It is not usually through the excess, but defect of humiliation, that souls in despair will not cast themselves on Christ, as they said Jer. 2. 25. *There is no hope; No: I have loved strangers, and after them will I go*. Despair is

is a proud sin, as well as Presumption: It made *Spira* wish he were above God.

Matth. 21. 31.

The pride of man is a greater barr against the grace of God, than grosser sins; *Verily I say unto you, that the Publicans and Harlots go into the Kingdom of God before you.* Meer civil men need more humbling, in some respects, than grosser sinners, because they have more to be proud of. It's self-liking and self-flattering that keeps a man upon his own bottom.

And as a man is prone to like himself, so to seek himself is at the end of all his actions; whether he pray, or preach, or hear, or confer, or trade, or eat, &c. self is his bias: And as proud man seeks himself, so he is self-depending; he lays the stress of duties on his parts, and the stress of reforming any sin upon his own purposes and resolutions, and his successes upon his own worth or wisdom.

Judg. 7. 2.

To this the Lord saw the Children of *Israel* to be inclined, — *lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me.* See the reasoning between *Joshua* and *Israel* in *Josh. 24. 19, 21.* *Ye cannot serve the Lord; for he is a holy God, he is a jealous God. Nay, but we will serve the Lord.* There is a tang of this in the spirits of godly persons; for alas, how seldom do they act grace, or in duty so, as considering that God must help the acts of grace, as well as give the habits? But for natural men, the Lord may say to them as to *Edom*, *The pride of thy heart hath deceived thee, thou hast cast off God, and relied on thine own strength.*

Isa. 49. 16.

Fourthly, Passion and peevishness in the nature of *Reas.4.* man begets prejudices against God: As natural men cannot please God, so God cannot please them. There is something of this leaven in God's own people, and the most eminent of them: *David* ^{2 Sam.6.8.} was *displeased*, because the Lord had made a breach upon *Uzzah*: and *Jonas* was *exceedingly displeased* ^{Jonah 4.1.} that the Lord spared *Nineveh*.

It cannot be said of God and his people, as it was of *David* and his, *2 Sam. 3. Whatsoever the King did, it pleased the people*; nay too often, much of that that we vent in prayer, or under the name of prayer, is but passion, and the effect of a feverish distemper on our spirits. Observe what is written of *Jonah* in this case, *It displeased Jonah exceedingly*: And he was very angry, angry in prayer: he was very angry, and he prayed unto the Lord, and said, *I pray thee, O Lord, was not this my saying when I was in my Country* ——— What was this praying, but the vent of humane passion unto prejudice against God? Yea, and which was much, he justified himself in it to the face of God. *Jonah*, ^{Jonah 4.9.} saith God, *dost thou well to be angry? and he said, I do well to be angry unto death.*

Fifthly, The natural wilfulness and rebellion of *Reas.5.* man is the cause why he will leave God, and be at his own finding and dispose; man would not submit to God: *As for the word that thou hast spoken to us in the Name of the Lord, we will not hear-* ^{Jer. 44. 16, 17.} *kent to thee, but we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth* —

There hath been a contest between God's Will and mans, from mans beginning, and so is to this day. ^{Gen.3.} God layeth all the wickedness of man upon

Pfal. 81. 11.

Joh. 5. 40.

his own rebellious will ; *Israel would have none of me.* And so did Christ the Jews unbelief ; *ye will not come to me that ye might have life : And how often would I, and ye would not? Matth. 23. 27.* O the rebellion of the Clay against the Potter ! the Apostle hints it in the Ninth Chapter to the *Romans*. Many a man will damn himself, rather than he will submit himself to the will of God ; *What is the Almighty that we should serve him?*

Job 21. 15.

How do men say in Prayer, *Lord, thy will be done,* and yet in their practice contend with God for their own? Those Jews were not alone in this, *Jer. 18. 12. We will walk after our own devices, and we will every man do the imagination of his own evil heart.* The Prodigal Son would have his portion from his Father into his own hands, that he might have his own will.

CHAP.

C H A P. VI.

Wherein Application of the foregoing Doctrine is made in several Uses.

WE have already seen the inclination and lustful desire that is in man to forsake God, and the Reasons of it : I shall now proceed to apply the consideration hereof in the following Uses. And

This informs us of the sinfulness of man's nature, *Use 1.* yea of the exceeding sinfulness of sin in man. For as the School-men say, Sin is a turning from God to the Creature, chiefly to a man's self, and his own Will.

But the truth is, sin is more than this ; it is a despising of God, it makes men speak against God ; *The people spake against God :* to turn their spirits against God ; to multiply words against God ; to speak *marvellous things against the God of Gods*, *Num. 21. 5.* *Job 15. 13.* *Job 34. 37.* *Dan. 11. 36.* The Serpents words to the woman at first stick to us still, *Ye shall be as Gods*—— And if God should let men have their own way and wishes, he would soon lose himself in the world : wicked men would turn God out of the world, as *Psalm 10. 4.* as well as out of their thoughts. And wherefore ? man would be God of this world, as well as the Devil. *2 Cor. 4. 4.* Men are naturally Polytheists, for many Gods. Some make *their belly their God*, *Phil. 3. 10.* others make silver and gold their God ; *They praised the Gods* *Dan. 5. 23.*

Tit. 3.

Gods of silver and gold; yea to make Devils their Gods, *they sacrificed to Devils*, Deut. 32. 17. to make their own Lusts their Gods, — *serving divers lusts* — Man would have any Gods rather than the true God; but especially he is inclined to make a God of himself. That *ye shall be as Gods*, pleased our first Parents well. Man would have the disposing of his Estate in his own hand: he thinks he can do better for himself than God does.

As *Alphonso of Spain* said, as story reports, That if he had been of God's Counsel at the Creation, some things should have been better contrived. Ah thinks many a man with himself, and in his heart, If I had but my life, and health, and strength, and whole condition in my own power, then I should be a happy man. Thus is man in the fall, fallen from God to himself, and would be what himself would. When God will have him poor, he would be rich; and when God will have him low, he would be high: If it were in his power, almost nothing should be with him as it is, or as it is in the world.

2 Sam. 15.

Luke 9. 33.

Most men would be Rulers in the world; *O that I were made Judge in the land*, saith *Absolom*. Peter would live upon Mount *Tabor*, *Master it is good for us to be here, let us make three Tabernacles*. —

Matth. 20.

Luke 22. 24.

How many have dispatched Princes and Popes out of the world; that their selves might be in their places? Those that are called *Fifth-Monarchy men* had need take heed of this Leaven; two of Christ's own Disciples aspired to sit one at Christ's right hand, and the other on his left in his Kingdom; and all of them sought for the preheminence, and that in a *Kingdom in this world*, Acts 2. 6. Some men would judge the World and Angels before the

time.

1 Cor. 6.

time. Oh how eager is our nature to be freed from God's will, and left to our own? then things should not only be altered in the World, but in the Word of God; the holy Scriptures themselves should come under an *Index Expurgatorius*, we see it at *Rome*; much of the Commandments, Threatnings, and Decrees of God should be blotted out: Men would be without the Word of God, or above it, as the *Pope* and *Church of Rome* presume to be. Our Saviour told the Pharisees and Scribes, That for the Commandments of God they had obtruded the Traditions of men, and that *they made the word of God of none effect by their Traditions.* Mark 7.8, 13. Yea, there are more than *Antiochus Epiphanes*, Dan. 11. that would do what they will, and exalt themselves, and magnifie themselves above every God. O how are men beholding to God for his restraining grace? It's a mercy to men, that they are not what they would be, and that he keeps many of their unruly inclinations dormant.

This informs us of the power and excellency of Gospel grace, that hath begun to destroy this vile-ness of our corrupt nature, and will in time swallow it up into victory: Grace at length will be the destruction of this evil humour of leaving God, and cleaving to our selves; the Conquest will be gradual, as *Joshua's* was over the Natives of *Canaan.* Use 2.

Believers would keep their station under God, they are much outed of themselves, and out of conceit with themselves; *In me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing.* Rom. 7.18. God is their all, and they are all for God: God is their hope, and *God is the strength of their hearts, and their portion for ever;* Psal. 39. *the desire of their soul is to him,* Psal. 73.25. *IIa. 26.8.*

They

They hide not themselves from God, as *Adam* did, nor can they bear God's hiding himself from them; *they set the Lord always before them*, as the Lord sets them alway *before his face*. They go not out of God's presence, as *Cain* did, but as earnestly desire it, as *Moses* did. They get and keep as near God as they can; *It is good for me to draw near to God*.

Grace makes a man desirous to be *in subjection to the Father of Spirits*; to be at his disposing; to begin to speak like *Jesus Christ*; *yet not my will, but thine be done*: Grace hath always brought men to this spirit and temper, *good is the word of the Lord, Isa. 39. ult. It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good*. If he say thus, *I have no delight in thee; behold here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good to him*. When God gave *Aaron* most heavy blows, *Aaron held his peace*. The Saints can do thus often, and they would always do thus; they pray, and strive to do so, and grieve when they cannot: They have indeed, they have great wrestlings with temptations to the contrary, yet their conflicts end in conquests.

The Viper may stick a while on *Paul's* hand, but he shakes it off again, and without any hurt. There is a great difference between a Saints *temptations* and his *resolutions*. The holy Psalmist was tempted to leave God and godliness; *Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain*; — here was his temptation, but what was his resolution? to the contrary; he abhorr'd the temptation, and himself too, where he indulged it in the least. *If I say I will speak thus, behold I should offend against the generation of thy Children: so foolish was I, and ignorant, I was*

Psal. 16.
Psal. 41. 12.

Exod. 33.

Psal. 73.

1 Sam. 3. 18.

2 Sam. 15. 26.

Lev. 10. 3.

Acts 28.

Psal. 73. 13, 14,
15, 22, 28.

as a beast before thee; but it is good for me to draw near to God. And here is the power and excellency of the grace of God in men; it would have men at God's disposing, and not their own.

This may exhort us to quicken this principle of Use 3. grace into operation; else sin that dwelleth in us, will make us weak as other men, as *Sampson* was, Judg. 16. when he had lost his Nazrarites locks. If we take not heed, and great heed, there is a wisdom of the flesh that will beguile us, as the Serpent did *Eve*. Our lusts are deceitful lusts, *Eph. 5. 22.* they are not dead, though they be dying; they are dead as to their dominion in all the Saints, but as to operation, in none; if we watch not, one or other of them will steal away our hearts from God, as *Absolom* did 2 Sam. 15. many of the peoples from *David*. O take heed ye set not up any Idol in your hearts; we are inclined Ezek. 14. 3, 4, 5. to it by nature, and these will estrange us from God.

And let us take heed what we ask of God: this Prodigal Son would needs have his Portion out of his Fathers hand into his own: Yea, *St. James* and *John* asked unfitting things of Jesus, to sit one on his right hand, and the other on his left in his Kingdom. Mark 10. 37. And again, they asked of him power, as *Elias* had, to command fire from Heaven upon the Village that slighted Jesus Christ; an evil spirit that Jesus rebuked in them, *Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.* Luke 9. 54. And in the same Chapter, *Peter* asked of Christ that he might dwell with him; and *Moses*, and *Elias*, in the Mount where he was transfigured. And all his Disciples had an itch to have ruled with him in the Kingdom of *Israel*, 1 Pet. 6. when he was risen from the dead.

O my Brethren, it is good that God deny us what we sometimes ask; we ask things for our own turns, without reference to his. Did we ask, as *Solomon* did, Wisdom, for God's sake more than his own; we should not be denied.

The Lord knows what it is to give much into our hands, since he trusted *Adam* with his whole Portion in his; yet this is in our nature to seek, as we see in this Son, *Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me.* But the Lord knoweth that we cannot manage, or bear so much as we would have, as our Saviour said to his Disciples, *I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now;* and therefore he hath taken another course with us, to take us off of self, and from standing on our own bottoms. He hath put all our Portion into other hands, into better and safer hands than our own, even into Christ's; *It pleased the Father, that all fulness should dwell in him;* and *the Father hath given all things into the Sons hands.* So that now we must have all from Christ, and not all at once, but according to the measure of the gift of Christ, and as we are able to bear and use it.

We must have all spiritual life from Christ, *he is our life;* and we must have all our righteousness from Christ, inherent and imputed, *he is the Lord our righteousness;* and we must have all our spiritual strength from Christ, *I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me.*

And we must have our temporals from Christ as well as spirituals; *All power in heaven and earth is given unto him:* we can have nothing from God, but through the hands of Christ; *The light of the knowledge of the glory of God must shine into our hearts.*

1 Kings 3.

John 16.12.

Col. 1.19.
John 3.35.

Eph. 4.7.

Col. 3.4.

1 Cor. 23. 6.

Phil. 4.13.

Matth. 28.

2 Cor. 4.6.

hearts through the face of Jesus Christ. It's from John 1. 16.
his fulness that we all have received, and grace
for grace. Our access to God, and acceptance Eph. 1. 6. and
 with him, is by him. The holy Scriptures dwell 3. 12.
 much on this point: God is resolved to take his
 Children off from self-depending and self-disposing,
 and thereby from self-ascribing: *Not unto us, O* Psal. 11. 1.
Lord, not unto us, but unto thy Name give glory:
Of thine own have we given thee, saith David 1 Chro. 29. 14.
 of his and his people's freewill Offerings.

God will give all, and have all again; as the Sea
 feeds the Rivers, and the Rivers return again into
 the Sea. *Lord, thou hast wrought all our works* Ecclef. 2.
in us. It is God that worketh in us both to will Isa. 26. 12.
and to do of his good pleasure. And truly it is 2 Phil. 1. 3.
 needful that we be kept off from self-weening, and
 that we be kept low. What we have in Grace
 and Comfort, that we have it by little and little,
 as *Israel* had the possession of *Canaan*. A little at a
 time is fittest for us, as the Mother does by her little
 Children.

God gives Grace to his own people with abate- *Note.*
 ments as to their desires; and when he gives them
 any great things, useth to do it with repercus-
 sives, to draw back the humour of Pride they are
 in danger of. When he gave *St. Paul* abundance
 of revelations, he forthwith gave him a thorn in 2 Cor. 12. 7.
 the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him, lest he
 should be exalted above measure. And therefore
 when God at any time shews you great things, ex-
 pect a thorn in the flesh to hide Pride from
 you.

God leaves his people sometimes to themselves
 to let them know of what ill consequence it is to be

2 Chron. 32. of themselves; so he did by good *Hezekiah*, who found the ill effect in the case. Oh let us be afraid to be left to our selves, to our own will, or wisdom, or strength, or desires, especially to our own lusts.

It was to *Israel* sorrow, that God gave them their requests; and *when he gave them up to their own hearts lusts, and to walk in their own counsels*. If we should be at our own dispose, and have our own will of God, as this younger Son had of his Father, it would be our ruin; and what was said to *Israel* would be said to us, *O Israel, thou hast destroyed thy self*.

Many Children, if they be let alone, will eat Coals and Clay, yea, and Ratsbane for Sugar; and so foolish and ignorant are God's own Children sometimes, in a time of temptation, as *Asaph* confessed of himself; and good *Agur*, *Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man*.

Fourthly. I cannot but take up a Lamentation for poor man, that he is such an altered Creature from his original. God made man a companion for himself, as he did the woman for the man; though he needed not man's society as *Adam* did *Eves*: Therefore he made man in his own Image, and after his own likeness, as he did the womans to the man's.

But man hath lost his likeness and his love to God together: Man naturally cares not for God's company; he hides himself from God, or would if he could, as *Adam* did; and goes out of the presence of God, as *Cain*.

Such a man as *Jonah* went out of the presence of the

Psal. 106. 15.
Psal. 81. 12.

Mos. 13. 9.

Psal. 73. 22.

Prov. 30. 2.

Jonah. 1. 3.

the Lord. It is natural to man to go a whoring from God as *Israel* did; *I have loved strangers*, Hof. 4. 12. and after them will I go; and we will come no more unto thee. Jer. 2. 25, 31.

Man is not satisfied with one God, but makes many Gods to himself, and himself the chiefest; *According to the number of thy Cities are thy Gods*, v. 28.

O *Judah*. And so may it be said to every natural man, according to the number of thy Lusts so are thy Gods: An adulterous man is not satisfied with one woman, nor the adulterous woman with one man; so is not a natural heart satisfied with one God. O what a strange Creature is man since the fall! Truly the Daughters of *Israel* did not more solemnly lament the Daughter of *Jephtha*, than we should our natural disposition to cast off God, and to be as Gods our selves; the whole Creation groans under this grievous Distemper of ours, and how little sense have we of it our selves? This is for a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation.

Lastly, Let us all make observation of our own spirits in this point: There is a difference in the spirits of the godly themselves in the case. Some are more carnal, and walk as men, as it was with some of the *Corinthians*; others are more spiritual, and walk as Saints indeed. Natural men like not to retain God in their knowledge, nor in their thoughts: They are weary of his presence, *Job* 21. 14. and weary of his service; *what a weariness is it?* weary of those that are like to God, as the *Sodomites* were of *Lot*. The *Gergesenes* wished Jesus himself to depart out of their Coasts. 1 Cor. 3. Rom. 1. 28. Psal. 10. 4. Mal. 1. 13. Matth. 8. 34.

Pfal. 16.8.
Pfal. 42. 1.
Lam. 3. 24.
Pfal. 27.7.

But there is another spirit in the truly godly, their desire is to *set the Lord always before them*. To live with him, to live upon him. They would not be at liberty from God's Commands, nor from his Government, nor from his Disposing. They are afraid to be left to themselves.

Isa. 26.9.

Now observe your own spirits how like you are to these, and how unlike the other: If you have Grace, the tendency of your Soul is towards God, and not from him. *With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early*. The corruption of nature cries, Divide the heart between God and thy Lusts, and between God and other things, as that Harlot cry'd, *Divide the Child*: But Grace votes for God to have the whole heart; *with my whole heart have I sought thee*.

2 Kings 3.

Pfal. 119. 10.

When therefore any hard thoughts arise in thee of God, look upon the Flesh, and that unclean Spirit the Devil, to joyn in the evil motion. Satan would perswade others besides *Job* to curse God; he will insinuate and suggest to you after the manner of *Absolom* to *Husbai*, *Is this thy kindness to thy friend?* So will Satan seek to make thy heart secretly to reproach God when thou art under hard dispensations of Providence by himself, or by harsh and cruel men; Is this God's kindness to his friends, to let them be so harshly dealt with?

Job 2.

2 Sam. 16. 17.

Pfal. 64.9.
Pfal. 73.1.

I, but lay things together, and wisely consider of God's doings, as the Psalmist said, and then you will say, *Let God be good to everyone that is of a clean heart*. O take heed of making any ill reflexions on God, either on his Word, or Works, or Decrees,

Decrees, or Attributes; this is the way to be tempted to leave God, and stand upon your own bottoms, as this Prodigal did; Give me my portion of Goods, and I'll be gone. I, but what follows? This leads to the second Particular, Point or Doctrine,

That mens leaving and casting off God's Government to live of themselves, and to be at their own dispose, is the cause of very much sin and sorrow in their lives. Of which in the following Chapter.

CHAP.

C H A P. VII.

Wherein follows the Second general Doctrine resulting from the First Part of the Parable: shewing both the sinful and miserable consequences of mens forsaking of God. The gross mistake of most men herein; and the Means to be used for prevention.

I Have finished the first general Doctrine from the first part of the Parable, *viz.* That every man by nature hath a lusting desire to leave God, to stand upon his own legs, and to be at his own disposal. Let us now see the sad effects hereof in the second general Doctrine, *viz.* That mens leaving and casting off God's Government, to live of themselves, and to be at their own dispose, is the cause of very much sin and sorrow in their lives.

This was the younger Son's case in this Parable, he leaves his Father, and is led by his own Lusts, and at last comes to great penury and drudgery; he kept Swine, and eat with them too; he fed them, and fed of the same meat with them, and at length could not get that; he would gladly have filled his belly

belly with the Husks which the Swine did eat , but could not get them.

It's to be observed , that his first step to happiness was his thoughts of returning to his Fathers house ; and his first step to misery was his leaving his Father. And thus it is with every man that waves the will of God , as to his Rule , and follows his own. It is his undoing, he now becomes a man of sin and sorrow, as *to leave father and mother , &c. for God*, is the way to be a blessed man or woman ; as it was said of *Levi*, who said to his Father and to his Mother, *I have not seen him*—— Deut. 33. 9, 11. And what followeth ? *Bless Lord his substance, and accept the work of his hands, and strike through the loyns of them that rise against him.* So to leave God , and follow our selves or men, it is the high way to sin and sorrow.

If they forsake me , I will forsake them, and many evils and troubles shall befall them. When those Jews in the 42. and 43. of *Jeremiah* rejected the Word of the Lord for their stay in their own Country , and would go down into *Egypt*, they there perished miserably. Deut. 32. 16, 17.

And when *Jonah* fled from the presence of the Lord, he met with a rough Sea , and was cast into it , and swallowed *into the belly of hell*. And what a deluge of sin and sorrow did *Adam* bring upon the World by casting off the will of God, and following his own ? God said eat not ; he would eat : this brought him and all the World under sin and misery, and the whole Creation into a groaning state. Rom. 7. 12. and 8. 22.

Quest.

Quest. But doth any man cast off God?

Ans.

Tit. 2. 16.

Ans. Though men do not so in formal expressions, yet really, and indeed many do. *In words they profess they know God, but in works they deny him.* Men may cast off God when they know not that they do so, as it is said of Lot, *That he perceived not when his daughters lay down, nor when they arose.* We know how strange the Jews made of it when the Lord charged them particularly and expressly, *O ye Priests that despise my Name: But they reply, Wherein have we despised thy Name? Te have wearied the Lord: Wherein have we wearied him? Te have robbed me: And they reply, Wherein have we robbed thee? Return unto me: but they say, wherein should we return? Your words have been stout against me, saith the Lord; yet you say, Wherein have we spoken so much against thee?* So plain is it that men may cast off God, and not perceive it.

Gen. 19.

Mal. 1. 6. and

2. 17.

Mal. 3. 7, 8, 13.

Quest.

Quest. But when do we cast off God?

Ans.

Ans. When we make to our selves false Rules to walk by, or false Refuges to rely upon, now we cast off God: when we set the Creature in God's stead, and let our own wills take place of him, now we cast off God.

Hos. 5. 13.

When Ephraim saw his sickneß, and Judah his wound, then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and not to God: And Judah refused the word of the Lord, and did after their own wills. And this is common with men to make the Creature their refuge, and their own wills their rule, and now they cast off God.

Jer. 44. 16.

Yea,

Yea, in any sin that a man doth knowingly and deliberately, he casts off God: Thus did *Saul* when he spared *Agag*, &c. contrary to his express Commission, *Thou hast rejected the word of the Lord*: 1 Sam. 15. And when a man rejects his Word, he rejects the Lord himself. *He that beareth you, beareth me, and he that despiseth you, despiseth me.* I say, where a man doth any thing he knoweth to be sin, or neglects to do any known duty, when he doth thus deliberately, and not through the transport of a temptation, he rejects the Lord, and gives him reason to reject him: But God keeps his Covenant when we break it; our unfaithfulness makes not the faith or fidelity of God of none effect: *His mercy endureth for ever*: He taketh not the many advantages we give; *He hath not dealt with us after our sins*, saith *David* by experience. O how often do we cast off God, and yet he will be our God still! He keeps his Covenant when we break it; therefore is that Promise, *I will heal their backslidings; I will love them freely.* Num. 33. Psal. 103.10. Hos. 14.4.

It is an accursed disposition in every man by nature to cast off God, and to do our own will; and he that knows not this by himself, knows not his own heart enough, but is a stranger there: Every heart by nature is poisoned with this, though it may be unseen to us, as *Laban's* Gods were to *Jacob*, though in his House.

And the Reason why men thus cast off God, is the prejudice they have at his ordering their conditions; men usually like not God's way he taketh with them. When he brought *Israel* into the Wilderness, then they had rather have been in *Egypt*; we are too apt to be displeased at God's disposing

Gen. 48. 17.

posing of us, as *Joseph* was at the manner of his Father's blessing his two Sons; and the Reason is because we pass a Judgment on God's disposals by sight; and not by faith: Now sight is a false Medium to take a view of Providence by, which is much more the object of faith, as the Creation is; *By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God.* A Staff that is streight when looked on through the air, seems crooked if looked on in the water.

2 Cor. 5. 7.

But I come to speak to the two Branches of the Doctrine, That to cast off God, and follow self, leads men into abundance of sin and sorrow. Into abundance of sin: It's a notorious inlet to sin; it pulls up the sluices and floodgates of wickedness, and brings in a deluge of sin and ungodliness.

Gen. 39. 9.

For 1. it's certain that the knowledge of God, and acquaintance with him, is the only sufficient barr against sin. *Joseph's* acquaintance with God was his preservation against the importunate temptation of his Mistress; *How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? The servants of former Governours bare rule over the people, that is, used their pleasure on them, but so did not I,* saith *Nehemiah, because of the fear of God.* To have God much and aright in our thoughts, is a forcible Caveat against all sin: As it is a powerful barr, so it is an universal barr against sin; it keeps from all sorts of sin, because all sin is against God. When a man so knows God, as to reverence him in his thoughts, and to close with his will, this is both a powerful and universal barr to sin.

Neh. 5. 15.

A man's reason and parts, and his natural Conscience, may be a fence against some sins, but not all; there are sins that any of these Hedges will let in: Nothing is a sufficient fence against all sin, but a holy aw of God; *Stand in aw, and sin not.* Psal. 4. 4. The Devil cannot easily tempt to sin where the Word of God is *hid in the heart*; thus saith S. *John* Psal. 119. 11. to those young men 1 *John* 2. 14. *I write unto you young men, because ye are strong, and the Word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.*

They shall all know me, and I will cause them to walk in my statutes, are links in the Covenant of Grace; and therefore those that live in any known sin, may conclude they know not God with a New Covenant knowledge.

And again, as a man's reason and parts, or natural Conscience may be curbs from some sins, so may shame from others, but these are only outside sins; for shame is no barr against sins within doors. Lusts may swarm there; there may be iniquity and hypocrisy to the full within, notwithstanding the thing we call shame.

There are no bounds against sins within doors, but an holy aw of God, and his holy Word; a setting these always before us, as *David* did. But Psal. 16. 8. when men put God from their thoughts and minds, Psal. 10. 4. as those Professors of wisdom among the Gentiles did, of whom the Apostle speaks in *Rom.* 1. 22, 28. *As they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.*—I say, when men cast God out from their minds, then they sin with the greatest freedom: *Our lips are our*

own, who is Lord over us? There is no hope, but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imaginations of his evil heart. This is the first demonstration of men's leaving God to be the inlet to sin, because there is no powerful and universal barr to sin, but a reverend, hearty, and experimental knowledge of, and acquaintance with God.

2. Because such as leave God are left of God to their own lusts: *My people would not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me: so I gave them up unto their own hearts lusts.* When men cast off the true God, he casts them under the power of a lying Spirit, as he did *Abab's* Prophets: *The fool hath said in his heart there is no God.* Observe what follows, *They are corrupt, they have done abominable works.* Thus for the Reasons of the first Branch.

2. The Reasons of the second Branch of the Doctrine, That mens leaving God lets in upon them abundance of sorrow. When *Cain* went out of the presence of God, he was a man of fears, and a terror to himself, as *Pashur* was; *I shall be a fugitive, and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me.* The reason of this is,

1. Because God will fill a man with his own ways, *Prov. 1. 30. They would none of my counsel, therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.* The Prodigal had enough of his farr Countrey, and the Children of *Israel* of the Flesh they lusted after: *He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption: They have sown the wind, and they shall reap*

Jer. 20.

Gen. 4. 14.

Gal. 6. 8.

Hos. 8. 7.

reap the whirlwind. That is a plain Text in the case in the Prophet *Isaiah*; *Behold all ye that kindle a fire, that compass your selves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled: this shall ye have of mine hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow.* Isa. 50. 11.

2. In this case God observes the Law of Retaliation; *Eye for eye, tooth for tooth*— Where men cast off God, he will cast off them; here is the Law of Retaliation. Thus said *David* on his Death-bed to his Son *Solomon*, *If thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.* With the froward thou wilt shew thy self froward, *Psal. 18. 26.* Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, *Jer. 2. 16.* And what says *Jonah* by dear experience? *They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercies.* *Jonah* thought to have found safety in going from the presence of the Lord, but this involv'd him in such dangers as he never knew before; he fell into the belly of hell. This was also the case of *Saul* when he rejected the Lord, in rejecting his word; *The Lord rejected him from being King; yea, the Spirit of the Lord departed from him, and an Evil Spirit from the Lord terrefied him.* Yea, when *Solomon* sought happiness out of God, all his findings were vanity and vexation of spirit. Whenever we forsake the fountain of living water, we hew out Cisterns, broken Cisterns, that can hold no water, *Jer. 2. 13.* Exod. 21. 24.
1 Chron. 28. 9.
Jonah 2. 8.
1 Sam. 15. 23.
and 16. 14.

Application.

1. This shews us the gross and grievous mistake, I would I might not say of most men, to call that their happiness which is indeed their misery, that is to be loose from God and his Word, and to be tied to their own wills, and led by their own lusts. O how many think it a fine World when they can say, *Our lips are our own, who is Lord over us?* Men think this a mercy, but the Lord deliver me from such mercy, said St. Bernard. That which men think their mercy, is their misery.

It is better for us that God hedge up our way with thorns, *i. e.* with difficulties and distresses, than let us take our own way, and run wild, as we are by nature; for *man is a wild Ass, used to the Wilderneß, that snuffeth up the wind at her pleasure.* If God did not hedge up mens way, they would be mostly upon the Devil's Commons: For-
 Jer. 2. 24. fake God, and the God of this World hath you in his paws, and at his will.

Whilst a man is farr from God, Salvation is farr from him; yea, the further any man's thoughts and desires, and cares are from God, the nearer Satan is to that man to enter into him, as he did into Judas. For if Satan will get to a man's *right hand* when he *stands before the Lord*, as he did to Joshua the Jews High Priest, he will get into his heart when he is out of God's presence.

We

We read in *Job* 1.6. how Satan got among the ho- *Job* 1.6.
ly Angels when they presented themselves before
the Lord ; (not that Satan comes into Heaven ; for
God and his holy Angels may be there where Satan
may also be ; in the air, or upon the earth : It is a
similitude from earthly Kings ;) how much more *1 Kings* 22.
may Satan joyn himself to men that are at a di-
stance from God ? when their thoughts and minds *Psal.* 10. 4.
are remote from God , than Satan is nigh them to
influence them, and to be a *lying Spirit* to them , *1 Kings* 22. 22.
and in them , as he was in *Ahab's Prophets* ; he
shews them happines and pleasure in doing their
own wills and lusts , which proves but a cheat, like
Juglers tricks.

That day wherein a man is a stranger to God , is
a day of Errors, and a day of Terrors in the concepi-
on, if not in the birth : It's thought a fine thing for
every man to do *that which is right in his own* *Judges* 17. 6.
eyes. If men might do what they would, and have
what they list, without check from God's Word and
their own Conscience ; O this would be a brave
World with many men ! but alas, this will be to
them as abundance of flesh was to *Israel*, *leanneß* *Psal.* 116. 15.
to their Souls ; this sweet meat would be sawced
with the wrath of God , as the *Quails* were ; and *Num.* 11. 33.
the sweetness of their own lusts would be to them as
abhorring as *Tamar* was to *Amnon* ; and as meat on *2 Sam.* 13. 15.
which a man surfeits.

So that it's a thousand times better to have our
judgments, reason, wills, and affections under God's
command and power then our own : It's infinite-
ly better to abide with God, than to be loose from
him in any of our faculties or ways. God never did
any man hurt that set his heart upon him ; but all
other

Isa. 55.2.

other things do; yea, they undo us when we set our hearts upon them; we now *spend our money for that which is not bread; and our labour for that which sufficeth not.*

Job 22. 21.

O then, if ever you will do your selves good, acquaint your selves much with God. A man acquainted with God, need not say as many do, *Who will shew us any good?* For God saith to him what he did to Moses, *I will make all my goodness pass before thee.* Remember Samuel's words to Israel, *1 Sam. 12. 21. Turn ye not aside from the Lord, for then should ye go after vain things which cannot profit, for they are vain.*

Hos. 9. 14.

All your projects and contrivances for content out of God's way, will be but as *miscarrying wombs, and dry breasts.* You may sometimes conceit that

Psal. 73. 12, 13.

God deals hardly with you, worse then with wicked men, as *Asaph* under a temptation did, and as *Job* did, *Job 10. 3.* but these good men eat their

Job 42. 3.

words, and recall'd their error; *So foolish was I, and ignorant,* said the one; *I have uttered that which I understood not,* says the other. Doubtless God's worst is better than the World's best, or Satan's best, or the Flesh's best. God's worst will turn it self into good, as the Serpent, *Moses* was afraid of, presently turned into a Rod in his hand.

Exod. 3. 3, 4.

Gen. 3.

But the Devil's best turns to the greatest evil; *Adam* and *Eve* found it so: He pleased them when he told them *they should be as Gods*, but they presently saw *they were naked.* And so the World's best, when the heart is set upon the World, turns into *vanity and vexation of spirit*; so *Solomon* found it. And the best of self proves as bad. When *Jonah* would wave God's Call, and follow his own

Ecclef. 1. & 2.

hu-

humour, he learnt by sad experience, and dear bought, that *they that observe lying vanities, forsake their own mercies*: He went from the presence of God to save himself, but he lost himself first in the Sea, and then in the belly of Hell. Jonah 2. 8.

If to depart from God and his Government, to be at our own dispose, be the inlet to sin and misery, then take heed of such sins as cause your departing from God. And what sins are these? Use 2.

First, Ignorance of God, of his worth and excellency; ignorance of his Allsufficiency, when men profess an unknown God, as St. Paul saw in Athens an Altar to the unknown God: Now their spirits sit loose from God; they have no great affections for him, nor do they much stand in awe of him, but sin with liberty and liking; *They proceed from evil to evil; for they know not me, saith the Lord.* Acts 7. 13.
Ignoti nulla
cupido.
Jer. 9. 3.

Mens ignorance of God's Attributes, and Word, and Works becomes sin to them, as Jeroboam's Calves at Dan and Bethel did to Israel. And Ignorance of God becomes mens misery too, as is said of the people whom the King of Assyria placed in the Cities of Samaria, that *because they knew not the manner of the God of the Land, therefore he sent Lions among them, and they slew them; because they knew not the manner of the God of the Land.* 2 Kings 12. 13.
2 Kings 17. 26.

2. Unbelief is a sin that makes men to depart from God. *Take heed Brethren, lest there be in any of you an heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.* Unbelief is the ground of mens drawing back from God. *Israels* unbelief in the Wilderness made them change their God into a golden Calve; their unbelief caused a double cast- Hebr. 3. 12.
ἀπιστία &
ἀπιστοία
sunt cognata.

ing off; they cast off God, and God casts off them; and the Land of *Canaan* would not receive them, *So then they could not enter in because of unbelief.* As Faith is the grace of union between God and Men, so Unbelief is the sin of separation.

3. Spiritual Pride makes us leave God, and God us. *The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God; God is not in all his thoughts:* and so God beholds the proud afar off. God keeps at a distance from a proud heart; his abode is with the humble spirit, but the proud man dwells by himself: Self-depending, and self-seeking, and self-ascribing, are the Idols of a proud heart, and keep God out of that his Chair of State.

O take heed then of the poyson that corrupt nature extracts from good parts, from moral vertues, and from great priviledges; these are very good and desirable in themselves, but through man's corrupt nature, there is a poyson that follows them; as the Bee has a sting as well as honey: And this poyson is our aptness to settle on our own bottoms, and to think of our selves above what is meet, as *Simon Magus* gave out that himself was *some great one.*

St. *Paul* himself was in this danger, *to be exalted through the abundance of revelations.* They drive the heat inward, they draw a man's eye too much on himself, and so keep him at a distance from God, which becomes a Snare to him, as *Gideon's Ephod* did to him, and to his House.

As a man's Castle or Fort, well furnished with Ammunition and Provision, is a good defence against an Enemy; but if he keep it against his Prince, it may prove his ruin: Thus a mans parts and gifts and

Feb. 3. 19.

Psal. 16. 4.
Psal. 138. 6.

Na. 57. 15.

Acts. 2. 9.

2 Cor. 12.

Judges 8. 27.

Simile.

and priviledges, may render him useful many ways; but if once they draw his eye off from God to self, to self-esteem and self-applause, he'll depend little on God, and ascribe little to him; and so they are his undoing.

It was self-righteousness that kept the Jews off from Christ, and the Scribes and Pharisees from sense of their sinfulness, and sorrow for it. Parts and moral Vertues, and a fair outward Carriage do often prove as great an impediment to the receiving of Christ, and the free Grace of God, as gross sins, and sometimes greater. A man that is full of self has no room for God; as a Glass that is full of clear water will hinder the pouring Wine into it, as much as a Glass full of Water that is muddy.

Lastly, If you would not leave God, and his Government, and disposal of you, get his New-Covenant-fear into your heart, and keep it there. *I will put my fear into their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.* Jer. 32. 40. This, I say this fear of God in the heart of man will link man to God faster than *Ruth* to *Naomi*, or *Jonathan* to *David*.

Quest. But what is this New-Covenant-fear of God in a man's heart?

Ans. It is such a reverend and high esteem of God, through inward acquaintance with him, and his Laws in our minds and hearts, as makes us, we will leave any thing rather than God: as *Abraham's* fear of God, such fear as is here spoken of, made him leave his native Countrey and Kindred to follow God. O feel this fear of God in your hearts, and it will be impossible to part you and God: Be his present dispensations towards you never so sharp, you'll cling to him, as the Child does to the Mother

Job 13. 15.

when she chides it; *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.*

Cant. 7. 10.

And let your outward condition be never so low, yea, and your parts never so mean, that men see no form or comlineß in you, *why they should desire you:*

Heb. 13. 5.

yet Christ's desire will be towards you; and God's Soul is knit to yours so, that he will *never never leave you nor forsake you.* Be but poor within as well as without, and God will have your Company to choose;

Isa. 66. 2.

To this man will I look that is poor, and of a contrite spirit. I dwell in the high and holy place,

Isa. 57. 15.

with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit. And so much for the second general Doctrine taught us in this first part of the Parable.

CHAP.

C H A P. VIII.

*Wherein is shewed, That God gives
to every man a Portion to be impro-
ved: together with the Reasons for
his so doing, from that particular
Clause of the 12th. Verse,*

*And he divided his Living
unto them.*

HA V I N G done with the two general Doctrines from this first part of the Parable, I shall now proceed to those which result from the several Clauses thereof; beginning with that in the end of the 12th. Verse, wherein the Father of these two Sons acts his first part, *viz.*

And he divided unto them his living:

The Greek word *Βίον* signifies *life*; it is translated so in 1 Tim. 2. 2. ——— *that we may lead a *ἡσυχίαν βίον* quiet and peaceable life* ——— Sometimes the word signifieth *livelyhood*, or *living* or *estate*, Luke 8. 43 ——— *which had spent all her living upon Physicians* *ἅπαν τὸν βίον* ——— *ans, or all her livelyhood or estate: So that this Fa-
ther*

ther divided his estate or goods to them ; he gave them their portions. Now the Doctrine from the words is this :

Doctrine. *That God gives men, even natural and sinful men, a portion, and leaves them to improve it.*

Matth. 25. 15.

Eph. 4.

The Father gave his younger Son a portion, and left him to husband it. The wicked and slothful servant had a Talent put into his hands by his Lord : Christ giveth gifts to men to improve, even to the rebellious, Plal. 68. 18.

Κοινὰς ἐννό-
ας, Com-
mon parts.
Rom. 2. 14, 15.

The Heathen have their Talents : First, They have the light of Nature within them ; they have a natural Divinity, whereby they know God, and much good and evil : — *having not the Law, do by nature the things contained in the Law* : They have excusing and accusing Consciences.

Rom. I. 20.

And Secondly, they have the light of the Creature without them, by which they may feel after God, Acts 17. 27. — *that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him.* As we know the presence of the Soul in the Body by feeling the Pulse, so may, and so have the Heathens perceived God by their inspection into the Creation : So saith the Apostle, *The invisible things of him (i. e. of God) from the Creation of the World are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead ; so that they are without excuse.* But now to Christians, who live in the Climate of the Gospel, God gives another greater light than those of Nature and the Creature, *scil.* the light of the holy Scriptures, and the offers of Christ and Salvation by him

him; the convictions also, and motions of the Spirit: The Spirit of God strives with men long, though not always. Besides, the Scripture holds Gen. 6. forth to Christians the example of Christ, and of former Saints.

And the Spirit also works in many men gifts and common grace, in some more, in some less. Judas had gifts as well as the rest of the Disciples; so had those that *prophecied in Christ's Name*, and in his Name cast out Devils ———. Every man hath a price put into his hand, *even the fool*. God gives the worst of men among us a Portion to improve, and leaves them to husband their Talents. Matth. 7. 22. Prov. 7. 16.

And first, men themselves would have it so, as we see in this younger Son: Men love to have it so, as the Lord said of the Jews: Natural men think they can shift sufficiently for themselves; they are full of self-projects, and self-confidence withal: *I will pull down my barns and build bigger; and I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease* — Such self-confident Creatures were those Is. 56. 12. *To morrow shall be as this day, and more abundant*. Many men can live in the World without God; this is their conceit. Reason 1. Jer. 5. 31. Luke 12. 16. Eph. 2. 12.

Yea, better men than these mentioned have been prone to self-conceit, and self-confidence; not only Peter, but James and John: They asked Jesus to sit one at his right hand, and the other at his left ———. *Jesus asked them, Are ye able to drink of the Cup that I shall drink of? They say unto him, we are able*. But alas, as they knew not what they asked, so they knew not what they answered; for when Jesus Christ was to drink the Cup, these two Disciples left him as well as the rest. Matth. 20. 22.

We may see self-conceit in the very Nature of man, if we observe Children when they first find their feet, they phancy they can go of themselves, and venture, though they get falls.

2. As men love to have it so, *scil.* that God should give them their Portions, and leave them to themselves to husband it; so God will have it so, and that for divers Reasons.

1. To justifie himself when he judgeth and condemneth men. God gives every man more than he useth well: We need not go to God's decree of Reprobation to justifie his damning men; we do not find that God will judge man by his decrees; he will not say, Thou art damned, because I reprobated thee, but because thou hast not lived up to thy light, nor improv'd thy talent, thy knowledge, thy conscience, thy opportunities, and many helps.

Matth. 25. 24.

God reaps not where he sows not, as foolish man is apt to charge him. Men will be damn'd for misusing their Portion God hath given them: the light, the means, the mercies, the afflictions, the Ordinances, and the examples God hath given and set before them to improve.

Rom. I. 20, 21.

God will not need to condemn the Heathen for not believing in Christ, negative unbelief; *i. e.* unbelief for want of means damns not; but they will be damned for misusing the light of Nature, and the light of the Creature, that would have taught them more of God and themselves than they would learn: *They are without excuse*, saith the Apostle, *because when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations.*

Indeed

Indeed evil and slothful Christians will be damned for not coming home to Christ, and for not walking up to the Profession of Christ they have made, because they walk not in those Duties of Holiness the Gospel discovers to them: These men will be *speechless* at the Sentence of Damnation which the Lord Jesus will pass on them, as he was in *Matthew 22. 12.* Their own Consciences cannot but concur with Sentence of Judgment; they will be speechless; they will be *αὐτοκατακριτοί*, *Tit. 3. 11.* self-judged and self-condemned. They will not chat at God then, as they often do now. *Who hath resisted his will?* Nay, but O man, who art thou that repliest against God, or answerest against, or chattest with God?

Qui tacet, consentire videtur.

Rom. 9. 19, 20.

2. God doth give all men, the worst of men, their Portion, or Talents to improve, to glorifie his free Grace, and that two ways:

1. In entertaining such as have abused their Stock put into their hands, as the Father did by his Prodigal Son, and as the Householder did by those that came into his work but at the eleventh hour. Sins against light and goodness, when pardoned, are great illustrations of free Grace: That woman *loved much* when *much was forgiven her*. O when a *Saul obtains mercy*, after he hath been a *blasphemer and a persecutor*, after he hath turned the edge of all his learning, parts, gifts, and interest against the *Name of Jesus Christ*, and so farr vitiated and debauched his Conscience, as to do all this under pretence of Conscience; as he himself said, *I ve-*

Luke 7.

Acts 26. 9.

1 Tim. 1.

I say, for such a man, after such base abuse of his Talents, to be received to Grace and Mercy, *But I obtained mercy*, this must needs exalt the free Grace of God in the hearts of such as have so abused his Grace: For God might have said to such a man as to the wicked and slothful Servant, *Cast ye him into outer darkness*: There is desert enough for it, but free Grace over-rules the Case.

Matth. 25. 30.

2. God does it, that he may glorifie his free Grace in a free choice of the objects of his Grace; for all men in themselves are alike indisposed to honour God with their Portion he gives them. As we are all alike by Nature *the children of wrath*, so we are all by Nature *foolish, and disobedient, serving divers lusts*. All by Nature refuse and resist Grace. Now God takes whom he pleaseth out of their own hands and power into his, to be under his Discipline: He made *David to know wisdom in the hidden parts*; but did not so by *Saul*,
 ——— *Thou hast hid these things* (saith our Lord Jesus to his Father, and that with thanks) *from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes*. And to you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, but to them it is not.

Eph. 2. 3.

Tit. 3. 3.

Psal. 51.

Matth. 11. 75.

Matth. 13. 11.

That Question of the Apostle in 1 Cor. 4. 7. supposeth this, *Who made thee to differ from another?* Indeed if the Question be asked a *Jesuit* or *Remonstrant*, he will Answer, *I my self made me to differ*; but it's a proud Answer: For it is plain, the Apostle asked not this Question to puff up man, but to humble him, and to exalt God, as appeareth by the following Question; *And what hast thou that thou didst not receive?* and then, *Why dost thou glory*

glory, as if thou hadst not received it? It's evident St. Paul's scope was that which is the scope of the Gospel, to *exclude boasting*: It is likely that Paul directed his Question to those *Theologi gloria*, as Luther used to call the vain-glorious and self-ascribing Preachers at *Corinth*, who would seem to be some great ones, as Simon did in *Acts* 8.

Acts 8.

In the Creation all was a confused Chaos till the Spirit moved on the face of the Waters, and then there was a distinction of Creatures: So all men by Nature are a confused mass, all in darkness, and disobedience, and abusers of our Portions, turning our Talents against God who gives them, as the Children of *Israel* made an Idol of the golden Earrings of the *Egyptians* which God had given them.

Gen. 1.

Exod. 32. 3, 4.

She did not know, saith the Lord, that I gave her Corn and Wine and Oyl, and multiplied her Silver and Gold which they prepared for Baal, or wherewith they made Baal. Such abusers are men of their Parts and Portions he gives them, until he changes their hearts, and giveth them another spirit. All are like *Onesimus* before his Conversion, *unprofitable Servants*, contrary to his Name, which signifieth *useful or profitable*; but when *Onesimus* was Converted, then he answered his Name to purpose; *Now profitable to thee and to me*, *Philem. 11. vers.* He became both a faithful Servant and a faithful Brother: So contrary are men in a state of Grace to what they were in their Natural state.

Hos. 2. 8.

Philemon 11.
Heinf. & Sculte.
in loc.

Colos. 4. 9.

Quest. But whence is this Change?

Ans. Not of man himself, but of God: He that made the old Creature makes the new. It is not the spirit of man that produces Regeneration, but the Spirit of God; *Except a man be born again of the Spirit*——. All Converts to a state of Grace, are *begotten and born of God*: He that is *begotten of God*, and *born of God*, are usual expressions with St. John.

John 3.

John 1:3 —

3. God gives men a Portion, and leaves them to husband it, that he may humble them in the sense and proof of their own weakness and impotency, and make them look for help from Grace: God will have men humbled, not only for sin, but also for their impotency to get Grace.

Rom. 3. 19.

There must be in men a double self-despair; one in regard of sin and guilt; *All the world must become guilty before God*: And another in regard of self-impotency to get Grace when they feel they need it. Sense of sin will make a man seek Grace; and sense of impotency will make him seek it of God: Many have the first self-despair, but want the second; for though they are out of hope in regard of their sins, yet not as to their own conceited self-sufficiency to repent and turn to God.

Josh. 24. 19, 21

Here lieth the reason of many mens not repenting and turning from sin to God, their thoughts of their Can when they will. *Joshua* told the people, *Ye cannot serve the Lord, for he is an holy God*: The people reply, *Nay, but we will serve the Lord*. Men commonly cheat themselves with self-conceit and confidence in the power of their own wills.

Alas,

Alas, God must not only give men power to seek Grace, but power to accept of it when he gives it, and power to use it when they have it. *Ephraim* had been brisk enough in self-dependence; *his pride* Hos. 5. 5. *did testifie to his face*: yet at length *Ephraim* crieth out, *Turn thou me, O Lord, and I shall be turned.* Jer. 31. 18. You that have Grace know, that not only the gift of Grace, but the use of Grace also is of God: *Work out your salvation with fear and trembling*; Phil. 2. 12, 13. *for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

The Spirit of God must help godly mens *infirmities in prayer*, Rom. 8. 26. teach them *what to say* when brought before Rulers for Christ his sake, Matth. 10. 19, 20. *Thou hast wrought all our works for us*, Isa. 26. 12. If God did not do thus for his own people, they would manage a state of of grace but ill. When *Hezekiah* was left to himself but in one point, he miscarried sadly: And therefore it is not ordinary for God to leave his people to themselves; he did *Hezekiah*, yet but in one single case, to find him matter of humbling in himself, as he had had matter of glorying in God. And

We all may see our own insufficiency in him, even in common actions; yea, to a good thought, we are like young Writers who must have their Hand and Pen guided, else they make bad Letters. Had not Jesus Christ prayed for *Peter's* faith, it had failed him; and it's thus with every Grace and all Duties: And therefore little Grace acted with great dependance on Christ, will do more than a greater measure of Grace, but less dependance on Christ's assistance. 2 Cor. 3. 5. Luke 22. 32. John 15. 5.

I Cor. 15. 10.

St. Paul ascribes not only the dignity of his Apostleship to God, but all his actual service therein; *By the grace of God I am what I am. I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me:* Not to the Grace of God in me, but with me: He refers the honour of the Case, not to inherent, but assisting Grace.

This is the reason why men receive not Grace, because they trust to their own purposes and endeavours above their allowance: And this is the reason why many, who have received Grace, do not increase and grow in Grace as some others do, because they live not dependently enough on assisting Grace.

CHAP.

C H A P. IX.

In which Application is made of the foregoing Doctrine; in shewing how much it concerns every man to improve his Portion from God; and in giving Directions for the doing of it.

I Have already shewed, That God gives to every man a Portion to be improved; together with the Reasons for his so doing. I now proceed to the Uses we are to make hereof. And

I. This exhorts us to consider our selves as Children who must give an account of our Portion to God our Father, and as Servants to our Lord. We have all a Stock to husband; every one hath one Talent at least; *There is a price even in the hand of a fool, Prov. 17.16.* Matth. 25.

God gave *Adam* at first the whole World for his Portion, and his own Image, besides a special Commandment as his Talent to improve. And since *Christ* ascended, God hath given the World the offer of *Christ* as their Portion; besides the things of this life. Gen. cap. 1, 26. Matth. 28. 19.

Mark 16. 16.
John 3. 16.

John 3. 19.

But as *Adam* abused his Portion, and was therefore thrust out of Paradise, and the Earth that was part of his Blessing, was cursed: so the World now abuseth their Talent, especially the offer of Christ; and this will be their *condemnation*, *that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light*. And if this Judgment pass not on the Heathen, yet they have the light of Nature, with the Book of the Creation, to point them to God, to fear, and love him, and to admire, and adore his power, and wisdom, and goodness: and their miscarriage in these will leave them without excuse.

Rom. I. 20, 21.

And Christians have another Book besides that of Nature, and that of the Creature, the holy Scriptures, and there Christ offers himself, and grace and glory with him; and if you improve not these Talents well, the Scriptures will judge you: *He that rejecteth me, saith Christ, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day*.

John 12. 48.

John 2. 12.

And men that have grace have more Talents than all others; they have all five Talents in respect of other men, though amongst themselves, one hath five, another two, and another one; there are *fathers, young men, and children* among them.

My Brethren, there is nothing that any man hath but it is part of his Portion, and he must be accountable for the management of it; his degree, his calling, his time, his strength, his weakness, his comforts, his crosses, his natural parts, his spiritual gifts, his grace, his means of grace, his estate, his priviledges, his ways, his words, his thoughts, God takes notice of a man's thoughts, and how he improves

improves them. *Thou understandest my thoughts afar off, Psal. 139. 2. And a Book of Remembrance was written before the Lord for them that thought upon his Name. And there is not a word in my tongue, but, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether, and art acquainted with all my ways. I say unto you, saith Jesus, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof in the day of Judgment: And we shall all stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ; And every one of us shall give account of himself to God.*

Matth. 3. 16.

Psal. 139. 3, 4.

Matth. 12. 36

Rom. 14. 10, 12

2 Cor. 5. 10.

But I cannot name all things Christians must be accountable for; it is certain for all their *trust*. *Paul had his trust, 2 Tim. 1. 11. and Timothy had his trust, 1 Tim. 6. 20. and we have every one of us our trust.*

1 Pet. 4. 5.

And by the way, Let the thoughts of this either prevent or prevail over your grudgings at the greater estates, larger parts and priviledges which others have above you; they are but Trustees in all; as to men, they are Masters of their own in a manner; but as to God, they are all Stewards and Servants, even the greatest of men, of Lords and Ladies; *give an account of thy stewardship.*

Luke 16. 2.

The Lord called *Moses* his Servant, and *Caleb* his Servant, and *David* his Servant, and *Nebuchadnezzar* his Servant, yea, Jesus Christ, as man, his Servant, *Isaiah 42. 1.* It was the Reply of a great Lady to one that told her, God had given her much; *No, saith she, God hath lent me much to improve, and I must be accountable to him for all I have.*

Num. 12. 7. &

14. 24.

Psal. 116.

Jer. 25. 9.

Prov. 3. 9.

1 Cor. 10. 31.

1 Cor. 12. 7.

○ let all consider their Portions, and their improvements of them for God: *Honour the Lord with thy substance*; God expects you should *eat, and drink*, and rest, and work, and do all to *his glory*. Men must give an account how they have used the light of Nature, and the light of Grace; their honour, their parts, their time, their trades, their relations; they are intrusted with all to improve for God as well as themselves; as the Apostle saith of the gifts of the Spirit. But alas, how many spend their stock upon their lusts; *The lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, or the pride of life?* And of those that do not thus, how many let their gifts lie fallow, and do little or nothing for God with them? Others devote their Estates to their covetous hearts: This is for a Lamentation.

Yea, where is the Christian that leaves all sin he might, and does all the good he might; that prays so much as he might, and walks by Faith as he might, and denieth himself so much as he might, and hath his conversation in Heaven so much as he might? We all need Christ to make up our Accounts to God, more than *Onesimus* did *Paul* to make up his to *Philemon*.

2 Cor. 3. 5, 6.

John 3. 35.

John 15. 5.

Quest. But where lies the power of improvement? Not in us; it lies in the hand of God: *We are not sufficient of our selves, as of our selves to think any thing; all our sufficiency is of God.* And the Father hath given this power into the Son's hand; *Without me*, said Jesus, *ye can do nothing.*

James 4. 2.

Ans. It is true; but there is an open way for us to God by Christ; and an open way to Christ by his own offer; *Come unto me* — And St. James saith, *Ye have not, because ye ask not.*

But

But now to those that lay this block in their own way, and make this Objection, either they make it of experience and proof; or else of meer cavil. If the former, if you have willed it, and laboured for it, and bemoan'd your selves in the want of it, then you have but one step to it; for if you are come to self-despair, through sense of impotency, now is the time of that Promise, *The feeble shall be* Zach. 12. 8. *as David:* and that, *He giveth power to the faint,* Isa. 40. 29. *and to them that have no might, he increaseth strength.* Do but now fix your eye on God, as the lame man did on Peter and John, and he'll bid you Acts 3. *rise and walk.*

When Saul went to seek his Father's Asses, and could not find them, he went to a Seer, to a Prophet, and had good speed: Why so when you cannot get grace, or ask grace, or do duty of your selves, by your own strength, take hold on God, and welcome; *Let him take hold on my strength.* Isa. 27. 3.

But if you make this Objection of Cavil, be it known to you, you mistake your selves; you'll miss of your excuse you phansie to your selves. He that had but one Talent had his Cavils; his Master was a hard Master, &c. But did this excuse him? Matth. 25. 24. &c. No.

It is one thing to know your own impotency to get grace, or improve grace, only by hear-say; and another to know it by experience and trial. If you object it, when you know it only by hear-say from the Minister and the Word of God, it is but a Cavil and a sorry Excuse: It is your knowledge of it by trial and proof that will make you look out of your selves for your strength, and that will bring you in grace, with power to improve it. You should

work out your own Salvation with no less pains, than if your own pains should procure it.

It is true, God gives the success; this is all in his hand, 1 Cor. 3. 7. But he gives success to him that labours for it. St. Paul makes not his inference thus; Because God hath all grace, and gives all, I'll do nothing; but therefore do *you work*, because *it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do*. You must labour as much, as if to will and to do were in your own power: You must work that God may work.

Phil. 2. 12, 13.

Many from their impotency father their sin and their condemnation for it on God; it is in way of Cavil, and not from their bewailed sad experience.

Rom. 1. 21.

Nay, the truth is, it is common with natural men to think themselves abler than they are, witness their frequent resolutions in good moods; O what they will do and be! As those Heathens professed themselves to be wise, so do natural men; they sometimes profess their ability, and sometimes their impotency, but have little practical knowledge of either.

Some men again disable themselves beyond their natural disability; they weaken their natural power by their own wilfulness; and this is so far from an excuse, as it's an aggravation of their sin. If a Master send his man to Market, and he is drunk, and so cannot do his business, will this disability excuse him? Surely no; it rather doubles his fault. This is the case of these Objectors of their impotency; their impotency is their own, they cannot charge it upon God; they may charge it in part upon Adam indeed; but when they come to declare their own will,

will, they make it their own impotency.

Ye will not come to me that ye might have life. John 5. 40.
They are impotent, and they love to have it so, as the Lord said of the Jews. They would not come Jer. 5. 31. to Christ, as he would have them, if they could. Thus much for answer to the Objection, and also for the use of Exhortation.

This Doctrine may also put us all upon enquiry Use 2. after direction in this case of infinite moment.

1. We must take an account of our Receipts from God, what our Talent and Trust amounts to. As those that take in work from others, observe what they take, that they may know what to return; we should consider, That God observes what he gives, and so should we what we receive, what estates, what education, what parts, what means of grace, what motions of the Spirit, what workings of Conscience, what temptations, what afflictions, what deliverances, what experiences, what encouragements in promises and providence.

Remember, God himself takes an account of what stock he hath put into our hands, as he ordered Samuel to tell Saul, *When thou wast little in thine own eyes, wast thou not made the head of the Tribes of Israel? and the Lord anointed thee King over Israel, &c.* 1 Sam. 15. 17.

And this account God ordered Nathan to give to David; *Thus saith the Lord, I anointed thee 2 Sam. 12. King over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hands of Saul, and I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah, &c.*

Suppose

Suppose thy self to be thus charged of God with an account of all he hath put into thine hands: for as he will set mens sins in order before them; so he will do their Talents and Trust.

2. Be sensible, and knowing by experience, of your own inability to discharge your Trust, though you have but one Talent; be as sensible in the case as *Moses* was of his insufficiency to deliver *Israel* out of *Egypt*; *Lord, who am I, that I should go in to Pharaoh, &c. I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.*

So sensible was *Gideon* of his weakness in himself to deliver *Israel*; *Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel?* Thus sensible be you of your own impotency to improve your Trust from God, be it never so small.

3. Look to the great assistance that is provided for you; *I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me. I have laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do.* O look with encouragement for help, for auxiliary grace in all your Trust: *I will instruct thee, I will teach thee and guide thee: I will be with thymouth, and teach thee what to say. Thou shalt guide thine affairs with discretion. The Spirit shall teach you all things, Job. 14. 26.* When our Lord *Jesus Christ* sent forth the *Seventy* upon special business, they did his work with his power, and so returned with a joyful account; *Lord, even the Devils are subject to us through thy Name, or Power.*

4. Look to your Undertaker for your accounts, even your Lord and Saviour *Jesus Christ*. As *Paul* was for *Onesimus*; *If he hath wronged thee any thing,*

thing, put it on my account; I will repay it. The same is our dear Lord Jesus to a Believer; and much more; *Ye are compleat in him*: He is a surety to God for Believers; and what thou canst not make up of thy account, put it upon his. Col. 2. 10.
Heb. 7. 22.

It hath been great relief to the Consciences of many poor sinners, that when Satan hath charged them, and they have owned the charge, but withal have seen their liberty to turn him over to Christ their Surety: Thus maist thou humbly, and reverently, and believingly do; *Lord, I come short in my accounts of the portion which thou hast put into my hands; and committed to my trust; but Lord, be pleased to look on Christ's accounts, and there are mine made up to the full.* Not that every man may make thus bold with our Lord Jesus Christ; but those that indeed believe in Christ, that have cast themselves upon Christ upon the terms of the Gospel; they that love the Lord Jesus in sincerity, and live to him, as well as look for life by him, such may doubtless use this freedom. Christ pays the true Believers Debts, and *blots out all hand-writings that are against him.* 1 John 2. 2.
Col. 2. 14. So much for the 12th Verse.

C H A P. X.

Representeth how quickly man forsakes God, when God leaves him to himself; with the Reasons whence it comes to pass; and the Uses we are to make hereof, from the first Clause of the following Verse,

And not many days after, &c.

TH E younger Son having got his Portion into his own hand, begins to act his part; first in sin, in this verse; secondly in sorrow, in the 14, 15, 16th verses; thirdly in repentance, in the 17th, &c. In the two former he is the picture of all natural men; in the third but of some, yea of few. In acting his part in sin; first, he presently leaves his Father's house: secondly, he goes into a farr Countrey: thirdly, there he spends all his Portion in luxury and riot.

Now in this Prodigal Son there are represented to us many things in natural men of sad Observation.

1. Here we see how soon man leaves God, when God leaves man to himself; man makes hast to sin against

against God. *Not many days after the younger Son took his journey into a farr Countrey, &c.*

This is the temper and inclination of the rational Creature, they sin so soon as they can; and herein they appear to be irrational: We see this both in the Angelical and Human Nature. The Angels that were left to themselves sinned presently, they forth-
 with left their first estate: *The Devil abode not in the truth*, saith our Blessed Saviour in the Evangelist *John*. The Angels that fell from their pure and excellent state immediately, they left their own habitation, as St. *Jude* expresseth it, *i. e.* their heavenly places. Hence it is said, that *God charged his Angels with folly*, because of their mutability and inconstancy in holiness and happiness. Jude 6.
John 8. 44.
Job 4. 18.

Some of the *School-men* hit right in this. *A Creature*, saith *Aquinas*, *though never so excellent and holy, may and will sin, if not prevented and assisted by grace*. And this was the Answer St. *Augustine* gave to the Question, How the Angels came to sin so soon, *Quia non Deus sunt*, because they are not God. God only is immutable in his being; *With him there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning*. *I am the Lord, I change not*, *Matth.* 3. 6. James 1. 17.

But many Angels changed their condition presently; *The Devil sinneth from the beginning*: the Devil, that is, the Prince of the Angels that left their first estate. A space there was between their Creation and detection; First, that it might appear they came holy Angels out of God's hand: And secondly, that they might remember afterwards, and for ever, from whence they were fallen; as our Lord said to the Angel or Pastor of the Church of 1 John 3. 8.
Rev. 2. 5.

Ephesus. Yet 'tis likely it was but a little after their holy Creation before they sinned ; it was before the sin of man, for man sinned by the instigation of the Devil.

And as the Angels soon fell from glory, so did man from grace, from his innocent state, from his likeness to God after which he was made : Some think he fell the same day he was created ; others think not so. The Scripture saith, *Man being in honour, abideth not* : He lodged not one night in his honour, as the Hebrew imports.

It is the nature of man to make haste to sin, as the Lord said to *Moses* (when he was with him on the Mount) of the Children of *Israel*, *They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them* : and of the same people in the *Judges*, *They turned quickly out of the way their fathers walked in, which kept my Commandments*. And the Psalmist speaking of man's disposition and complexion by nature, saith thus of him, *That he is estranged from the womb, he goes astray as soon as he is born*. Men are born with evil Dispositions, and act them so soon as their Faculties can sin, if grace prevent not.

Young Nettles sting, and young Crabs go backward ; and so man in his youth dedicates himself to sin, *Youth and Childhood are vanity* ; and St. *Paul* speaks of *youthful lusts*. How soon were the *Galatians removed*, or transported as the Greek signifies, *unto another Gospel*. The Church of *Corinth* was presently corrupted ; and so were the *Seven Churches of Asia*.

Rea-

Gen. 3.
2 Cor. 11. 3.

Gen. 1. 26.

Psal. 40. 12.

Exod. 32. 8.

Judges 2. 17.

Psal. 58. 3.

Eccles. 11. 10.
2 Tim. 2. 22.
Gal. 1. 6.

Reasons of the Doctrine.

1. Because the corrupted nature of man is greedy of sin, *They work all uncleanness with greediness*: Eph. 4. 19. They have a strong appetite to sin; the strength of appetite, as in the Hebrew, therefore called *greedy dogs*. Isa. 56. 1. Man sinned almost so soon as he was, and if he might, he would sin as long as he is, and would, if he could, sin for ever, and be for ever that he might sin: How will men break through all restraints to sin? as *Balaam* would have rush'd through all the checks and disappointments he met with in his way to curse *Israel*.

Omnis peccator peccat in æternum.

Though *the dumb Ass* forbad his madness, and the *Angel* stood in his way with a drawn sword to stop him, yet he was violently hurried on with the strong impulse of his own lusts.

2 Pet. 2. 16.

Num. 22. 23 to 30.

St. Ambrose speaks of one *Theolimus*, who being told by his Physician, That unless he left his intemperance, he would lose his eyes: His heart was so desperately set on his lust, that he replied, *Then farewell eyes; I must drink, though I drink out my eyes*.

On Luke 4.

Tunc vale lumen.

Thus do the hearts of many say, though not their mouths, Farewell God, farewell Christ, farewell Heaven, I must have my lust. *Amnon's* lusting after *Tamar* is an instance in the case. *The fool* hath said in his heart there is no God, i. e. O that there were no God! Look what trouble it is to Saints to part with God, such trouble it is to wicked men to part with sin. *There is no hope, No; for I have*

Psal. 14. 2.

2 Jer. 25.

loved strangers, and after them I will go. The immediate reason of mens sinning is their will: It was so in the fall, and so it is since.

2. A second Reason why men make so much haste to sin is their weakness; no man by nature hath strength enough to hold out against temptations to sin: If God were not infinite in strength, he would not be immutable; *The strength of Israel will not repent*, or change. But the first temptation turned man upside down; and since the Devil had that success, he follows man close with temptations; and if he fails in one, he presently tries another, as *Balaam* did experiments to curse *Israel*.

Man is too weak a Creature to stand out a temptation to sin without the aid of grace: either preventing or assisting grace, besides inherent: It was seen in *H Ezekiah*; and in *Peter*, when left to themselves. Grace it self, of it self, is not immutable. The godly know by experience that it is subject to ebbings and flowings; and the reason why the people of God do not quite lose grace, is not from the nature of grace in it self, but because grace in the Saints is fed by grace from the fulness of Christ; and because the Covenant of grace hath undertaken they shall not totally and finally fall from grace.

And again, grace is upheld in the godly by their communion with God, and therefore the more this communion is interrupted, the less grace, and the more sin Saints themselves have: Hence it is that when they come to live in the blessed vision of God in Heaven, they cease to sin, and there is no more capacity of sinning.

This

This is the reason why the elect Angels, so called in Scripture, stood in their first estate ; free grace preserved them in the beatifical vision, and still doth; *And they always behold the face of my Father in Heaven*, saith our blessed Saviour. O remember that man is by nature a weak Creature, and yet very wilfull, and would be independent on God, and so *the Devil leads him captive at his will*.

1 Tim. 5.21.

Matth. 18. 10.

2 Tim. 2.26.

Application.

1. This shews us the necessity and mercy of preventing and restraining grace ; were it not for this, the World would be fuller of sin than it is, even like the old World ; all places would be *Sodoms*, and the godly as *Lots* therein. But God makes wicked men chew upon the Bit ; he seeth they have need of Bit and Bridle, as well as the Horse ; *I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips*, saith the Lord to *Sennacherib*.

Psal. 32.97.

Ila. 37.29.

If God had not restrained *Balaam*, he would have cursed *Israel* ; he made many attempts after disappointments. Had not the Lord withheld *Abimelech*, he had wronged *Sarah* : And when the Lord saw that nothing would be restrained from the builders of *Babel* which they had imagined to do, he confounded their language.

Gen. 20.6.

Gen. 11. 6, 7.

2. This may be of use to humble us all, that we were innocent, and without sin so little a while ; we made haste to sin, we soon left God in *Adam*, as this younger Son did his Father ; this I say should humble us, that *our goodness was as the morning cloud*,

Use 2.

Hof. 6.4.

cloud, and passed away as the early dew. Our first Parents were holy Creatures when they came out of the hand of a holy God; but they were like the *Ephmera*, their holiness was but holiness for a day; I but *we have sinned days without number*, as the Lord said to his people in *Jeremiah*. We begin betimes to sin, and hold on till God break us off from so sinning. This was the melting Confession of the Lord's people; *We have sinned against the Lord our God, we and our fathers from our youth.*

And as this should humble us, that we begin so early to sin; so we have reason to be humbled, that usually we are so long before we are good: It is commonly many years before our Conversion to a state of grace: Some come not in to God till the *sixth hour*; others not till the *eleventh*; O how should this humble late Converts, that they are good so little a space on earth? Some indeed *give God the kindness of their youth*; God hath their First-fruits; he *sets them apart for himself* from their infancy; *Before thou camest out of the womb I sanctified thee*, saith the Lord to *Jeremiah*. *Samuel* was good from his youth; *The Child Samuel ministred unto the Lord: I thy servant fear the Lord from my youth*, said *Obadiah* to *Elijah*. And *Timothy knew the holy Scriptures from a child*, 2 *Tim.* 3. 15. but these are rare Birds.

There are some indeed that think themselves to have been Saints, but no such matter: as that young, rich; great man, *All these have I kept from my youth*; but he was mistaken.

And

And there are others make a shew betimes, as if they would look towards God and Heaven, but retreat again; such as God spake of in *Jer. 2. 2.* *I remember thee, and the kindnes of thy youth; and yet in the fifth Verse he complains that they were gone farr from him, and become vain.* Some have kindness, or rather seem to have kindness for God in their youth, but never after; *They begin in the spirit, but end in the flesh.* *Gal. 3. 3.* The Angel of the Church of *Ephesus* left his first *Rev. 2. 4.* love.

3. This may speak comfort to those that are *Use 3.* Saints, and God's holy ones indeed: And wherein? Because they have a contrary disposition to this of natural men: Natural men make haste to sin; they make haste to do good; *I made haste, Psal. 119. 60. and delaid not to keep thy Commandments.* This gracious disposition was prophesied should be in Converts among the Gentiles: *Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hand unto God: And the Inhabitants of one City shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, I will go also.* *Psal. 68. 31. Zach. 8. 21.*

The will of a godly man is seldome behind to any holy duty; *To will is present with me.* *Rom. 7. 18.* And where this is, there is a badge of grace, and of a holy nature: The flesh indeed makes them linger sometimes, as *Lot* did in coming out of *Sodom*; but when the regenerate part sitteth in the chair, then the Soul calls, as the Lord did to *Lot*, *Haste thee, haste thee to Zoar.* As other men hasted after their gods, so *David* hasted after his God; *Awake up my glory, awake Psaltery and Harp, I my self will awake early.* *Psal. 16. 4. Psal. 57. 8.*
With

With my spirit will I seek thee early, Isaiah 26. 9.

Heb. 3. 7.

Delays in Religion are dangerous; *To day if ye will hear his voice harden not your hearts.*

Mark 25. 11.

The foolish Virgins were too late to enter in to the Marriage with the Bridegroom. Thus much for the Observation from the first words of the Verse (*And not many days after*) viz. That so soon as God leaves man to himself, he soon goes away from God.

CHAP.

C H A P. XI.

Sheweth the worldliness of man's heart by nature; from the next Clause of the 13th. Verse,

The younger Son gathered all together.

HE bundled up his happiness, even his gods with his goods, as *Rachel* did *Laban's*. He Gen. 31. said to his Soul, as that rich man did, *Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take* Luke 12. 19. *thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.* This young man carried his gods in his goods; and herein he gives us to take notice,

That it is a disposition in natural men to Doctrine.
carry their gods in their goods; their hearts, which should be the seat and temple of God, is the habitation of these.

This young man's Portion was his all, even his Heaven and his God. *St. Paul* speaks of some Phil. 3. 19. *whose belly was their god:* And *Job* of those Job 31. 24. *whose gold was their god,* being their hope and their

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confidence. Many men have their Portion in this life; their Heaven and Earth together.

Pfal. 17. 14.

Exod. 32. 4.

Judges 17. 4.

Gen. 31. 34.

Pfal. 17. 14.

Luke 9. 33.

Pfal. 49. 11.

Phil. 3. 12.

Gen. 25. 31.

Luke 10. 20.

Jer. 17. 13.

Every thing is a mans god that feeds his lust, and his heart is set upon, as the *Israelites* golden Calf was to them; *These are thy gods, O Israel---* and as *Micahs* Mothers eleven hundred shekels of silver were turned into Gods. And thus all natural men make gods of their lusts, or of their goods, on which they fix their hearts. They carry their gods in their goods, as *Rachel* hid her Father's Idols in the Stuff. It is natural to man to seek his felicity here. The Scripture calls them *men of this world*; here are their hearts, and here they would always be, if they might have their choice. They have a greater mind to be here, than *Peter* had to be on Mount *Tabor*.

Their inward thought is, saith the Psalmist, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names.

This shews that their hearts are wholly here; their minds are given up to earthly things. So they might be here on earth for ever, they could be content to be out of heaven; as *Esau* parted with his birthright for a mess of Pottage.

Our blessed Saviour bad his Disciples *rejoyce rather that their names were written in heaven, than that the Devils were subject to them.* But these men would rejoyce rather if their names might be written on Earth. Though the Scripture speaks of it as a Judgment; *They that depart from me shall be written in the earth:* Yet earthly things lie nearest to a carnal man's heart; as it's said Queen *Mary* should say on her

her Death-bed, *That if they saw her heart when dead, they should see Calice there.* The Israelites appetite or phancy was more after the Leeks, and Onions, and Garlick of *Egypt*, than after Manna. Numb. 11. 5, 6.

Men are apt to set up Idols in their hearts, many places in *Ezekiel* shew it; the children of *Israel* chose new gods. The Devil would be the god of this World; this is his *name* by usurpation, 2 *Cor.* 4. 4. Many mens hearts are devoted to him, and know it not; as it's said of *Ephraim*, that he had gray hairs and knew it not: yea, he made an essay for Christ's heart and devotion to him. And when he cannot get in himself into the hearts of men, as he wishes, then he gets into one Creature or other to be as god there. When *Esau* said to *Jacob*, *I have enough*; Gen. 33. 9. what was his enough? the fulness of his outward condition without God. Carnal men can be content with the World without God; they *are without God in the world.* The Creature, in some sort, satisfies them without God, as it does the Beast. Man makes himself in this like the Beast. *Esau* neither saw, nor sought God in *Jacob's* face, as *Jacob* did in his, Gen. 33. 10. Men naturally affect the Creature more than the Creator. Indeed, if a godly man have not God for his Portion, his all he hath is nothing: *The Lord is my portion, saith my soul: and, whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee.* The Lord knows indeed that his Saints on earth have need of earthly things, as our blessed Saviour said to his Disciples. And therefore gives them of these more or less, as he sees meet; yet whatever he gives them of the World, he so gives it, that they may see him in it, as *Jacob* did in *Esau's* face. Eph. 2. 12. Psal. 49. 20. Rom. 1. 25. Lam. 3. 24. Psal. 73. 25. Matth. 6. 32.

O take heed of thinking you have enough, when you have the most of this world, except you have God with it, and see God in it. Take heed of this young man's spirit; when he had got his Portion, he now feels no want of his Father, but takes his journey into a farr Countrey. Take heed also of thinking that you have not enough of the worlds good things, when you have, or may have God himself with your little; for now your little is as much as All; and you may say with the holy Apostle, *As having nothing, yet possessing all things.*

2 Cor. 6. 10.

CHAP.

C H A P. XII.

Wherein is shewed, How inclinable man is by nature to go farther and farther from God; from the following Clause,

And took his journey into a far Countrey.

IN this course of the Prodigal, who herein is the Representative, as it were, of natural men, we may observe two Doctrines; the first (whereof in this Chapter) is this,

That man by nature would go farther and farther from God; he would get to the utmost point of distance from him. Doct. 1.

This Prodigal did not only leave his Father's House, but went into a far Countrey. Ungodly men love to be far from God, that they may sin their fill. As a godly man goes from grace to grace; so an ungodly man from sin to sin. As it is their Judgment to do so; *Add iniquity to their iniquity*, so it is their choice; *They go from evil to evil.* The *Ephesians*,
Psal. 73. 27.
Psal. 69. 27.
Jer. 9. 3.

Eph. 2.

Gen. 3.

Psal. 10. 4.

phesians, before their Conversion, were *as far of, and without God in the world*. When *Adam* was fallen from his innocence, he got as far from God as he could. Natural men shove God out of their thoughts as much as they can.

Mark 12. 34.

It is true, all natural men are not at an equal distance from God actually, though all are by nature inclined to be at the farthest point: There are degrees in a natural state, as there are in a spiritual. Our Lord Jesus told him that answered him so discreetly, That *he was not far from the Kingdom of God*. Some men are utter strangers to Christ; others are bordering on Conversion; yet still in their natural state; as the *Israelites* were at the borders of *Canaan*, when yet they entred not in.

Quest. But what is the nearest or least point of distance from Christ, in a natural condition; and what is the farthest?

Ans. When men like Christ, but not at his terms, yet are troubled the terms are so hard that they cannot yield to them: When Jesus told that man in *Mark* 10. 21. That *he must sell all, and follow him*, it is said the man was sad at that saying, and went away grieved — v. 22. This man was bordering upon Christ, but left him.

John 2. 23, 24.

So when men make a profession of Christ, and yet their hearts are not right towards him; they are near Christ, but not near enough, they are not in him: *Many believed on his Name, but Jesus did not commit himself unto them, for he knew what was in man*.

Jer. 12. 2.

Isa. 29. 13.

Thou art near in their mouths, and far from their reins, saith *Jeremiah* to the Lord. And again, natural men may be near God, as in profession, so in pri-

privileges: Judas was one of Christ's Disciples, one of the Twelve: And the people of Israel were a people near unto God. This is the nearest point of distance from God. Psal. 148. 14.

But then secondly for the farthest point of distance; and this is, when men live as it were without God in the world; live in sin without sense of it, and sin with greediness; it is meat and drink to them to sin, as it was to Jesus Christ to do his Father's will; *They drink iniquity like water*, Job 15. 16. *and who being past feeling*; whose sense of feeling, as to any evil in sin, is gone; *They give themselves over to work wickedness: Ahab sold himself*, but some give themselves to sin. These are Candidates at least in Atheism. *They say the Lord shall not see*: And they think *that God is such an one as themselves*: and thus they flatter themselves in their own eyes; they half think there is no God, and altogether with it. Few men indeed are always or altogether Atheists: The Devil can never be an Atheist, being always under the sense of God's wrath; but he tempts men to be Atheists, and prevails very far, yet not to the full. Eph. 2. 12.
John 4. 34.
Job 15.
1 Kings 22. 20.
Eph. 4. 19.
Psal. 94. 5.
Psal. 50. 21.
Psal. 36. 2.
Psal. 14. 1.

They lie, saith the Philosopher, that say they hold there is no God; for though they say so to others by day, yet they say otherwise to themselves by night: these are the men that keep at the farthest point of distance from God, which was this Prodigals case; he went from his Fathers House into a far Countrey. Seneca.

Quest. But how can any man be far from God, since God is every where? *Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence?* And it's said in Job, *There is no darkness where*. Psal. 139 7.
Job 34. 22.

where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.

Acts 17.27.

And saith the Apostle, *God is not far from every one of us*, either Christians or Gentiles.

Ans. There is a three-fold distance.

Plal. 139.8.

1. Of place; so no man can be at a distance from God; *If I ascend into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there.*

2. There is a distance of nature, which is where there are opposite natures and dispositions: and so many, if not most men, are at a great distance from God; there is nothing of the Divine nature in them, they have different minds and wills from God's. God wills this or that; and they will the contrary. Many men make God's affirmative Commands negative, and his negative Commands affirmative.

Jeremiah told those Jews in *Jer.* 44. 16. that they should not go into *Egypt*; and they replied, *As to the words of the Lord thou hast spoken to us, we will not hearken to thee.*

3. There is a distance as to grace and favour; and so God may be said to be far from men in his special grace; as when men have not the grace of God in them, nor the love of God, nor acquaintance and communion with God; God may be said to be far from them.

Psal. 17.17.

The presence of God with men must be measured by his grace and spirit in them; and not by his common favours, as riches, power, natural parts, means of grace, yea common grace: for heathens may have some of these, and hypocrites may have others, and yet both at a distance from God, as to saving grace; God cannot say of them as of *Abraham*,

Isa. 41.8.

Abraham my friend, my familiar. A blind man

man may be near the Sun, and yet be said to be as far off, because he wants the light of it; so it is with many men who live in the light of the Gospel, and yet are far from God as to any saving knowledge of him in Christ. A man may be your next Neighbour, and yet be as far from kindred, as the farthest in the Town.

The Lord judges men near to him, or as far off, by their hearts; *Take heed lest there be in any of you an heart of unbelief to depart from the living God.* An Hypocrite may be nearer God's people in outside similitude, than a Publican. As a painted Pot on the wall is nearer a Pot in outward similitude than a piece of Clay under your feet, and yet in fitness the Clay is nearer, because it is apter to be made a Pot; so an humble Publican and Sinner is nearer coming into the Kingdom of God than a proud Pharisee or Hypocrite, because his heart is more tender, and humbled under the sense of sin and wrath: *The Publicans and the Harlots go into the Kingdom of God before you.*

Now the reason of mens going from God as far as they can, *i. e.* by nature, is the enmity that is in man's sinful nature to God; though God become nigh to our nature in his Sons assuming of it, yet naturally we keep at the greatest distance from his nature, *i. e.* from his holiness and purity: *The carnal mind is enmity against God; it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be.*

The Greek word signifies the best of a natural man is cross to God; the more wisdom and wit a natural man hath, the more crossly he acts towards God. This enmity in man to God came in with his fall from God: Before Adam hid not himself

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from

James 2.23.

2 Pet. 1.4.
Gen. 1.

from God, but was the friend of God by nature; his first nature, as *Abraham* was by grace; he could lean on God's bosome as the beloved Disciple did on Jesus; he had the rays of the Divine nature in him, as men in a state of grace have; God made him to his own likeness, but when he fell from his innocence, his enmity against God came in.

2 Tim. 3.4.

A natural man cannot subject himself to the will of God, nor does he love the likeness of God; he is a lover of his own lusts more than of God. The Psalmist speaks of *haters of God*, Psal. 81. 15. and so doth the Apostle, *Rom. 1.30*. They care not for acquaintance with God, *verse 28*. yea, there are men that could wish there were no God.

Application.

Heb. 3.12.

1. This is useful to examination, to try our selves, whether we be near God, or gone far from him: And trial in this case is of great concernment to us; for we may be near to God outwardly, and in a profession of him, yet inwardly be at a distance from him; as those Jews were in *Isa. 29. 13*. *This people draw near me with their mouths, and with their lips honour me, but have removed their heart far from me*. We must estimate our nearness to, or distance from God, by our hearts. Therefore

Psal. 104.34.

1. Is God great or small, high or low, in our hearts account, in himself, and his word, and his works, especially as he is a holy God? If God be not much in our thoughts, and dear in our thoughts,

as

as to *David*, it's a sign that we are far from God. Out of mind out of sight. What's the reason that the Stars seem so little to us, that are such great Bodies in themselves, but because they are at a great distance from us, and we from them? so God is a great God, *glorious in holiness, fearful in praises*; Exod. 15. Psal. 63.3. *his loving kindness better than life it self.* And if he be not so in our thoughts, and to our hearts, it argues we are far from him; for were we nigh him, the pleasures, the profits, the honours of the world would be but trifles to us; these would be far from our hearts if God was near them. *I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies as much, and doubtless more, than in all riches: I love thy Commandments above gold, yea above fine gold.* Psal. 119. 127.

2. We may know our distance from God by the chilness and coldness of our minds and affections in his service and ways. As in Winter, when we are at a farther distance from the Sun, days art short, and nights long, we are cold, and it is a dead season with all things: Why so when we are dull and dead-hearted in holy employments, and walk dully as to acts of grace and comfort, it signifies that we are at a distance from God, and he from us, as to his gracious and quickning presence.

3. Men may be known to be far from God by their secure sinning, and sinning without sense. The holy Apostle gives three signs of men that are greatly remote from God, and they are desperate signs. Eph. 4. 18, 19.

1. Their gross ignorance of God: 2. Their sinning without feeling: 3. Their sinning with greediness: *Having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their*

hearts, who being past feeling, have given themselves over to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

When men sin with greediness, it's a sign they are past feeling, and when they are past feeling, it's a sign they know not God, and this is a sign, they are alienated from the life of God, and so are at the greatest point of distance from him.

O that men could bewail this cursed disposition, to be willing to be strangers to God, and to be as far from him as they can; they will go from God to the Devil as *Saul* did: Many men fly from God, as from a Lion, and fly to Satan, who is indeed a *roaring Lion, seeking whom he may devour.*

1 Sam. 28.

1 Pct. 5.8.

CHAP.

C H A P. XIII.

Representeth, how natural men are driven further from God by all the good he doth for them; whence it is thus; and what Uses are to be made hereof; from the same Clause,

And took his Journey into a far Countrey.

I Have done with the first Doctrine from this Clause of the 13th. Verse: I now proceed to the second, which is this,

That whatever good God bestowes on natural men, it drives them the further from him. Doct.2.

The more the Sun shines on the Dunghil, the more it stinks. This baseness is in every man by nature; *Hear O heavens, and give ear O earth, for the Lord hath spoken; I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.* The Lord calls heaven and earth to witness in this strange case; which, Isa.1.2.

Numb. 20. 8.
Psal. 105. 31.

which, as it is an Apostrophe to Angels, and all the Gentile world, concerning the Jews; so may it also imply, that the whole Creation, even of senseless Creatures, are (as I may say) more obedient to God than natural men are.

1 Sam. 15. 11.

Moses in Deut. 32. 15. charges Israel thus; *Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: Thou art waxed fat &c. Then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the rock of his salvation.* This people were worse towards God after their wonderful deliverance from Egypt than before, and worse in Canaan than in the Wilderness. The Lord made no such complaints of Saul, as after he made him King; then Saul so miscarried, as *It repented the Lord that he had made him King:* And we may find many instances besides Saul.

Isa. 47. 10.

1 Cor. 1. 21.

2 Pet. 3. 5.

1. Look into the world, and you shall see many men of great parts and learning to imply them against God, rather than for him; their learning serves them to reason against God and Christ and the Spirit, and the Scriptures, and against the Lord's day, and the Saints; as the Lord said to Chaldaea, *Thy wisdom and thy knowledge hath perverted thee; and thou hast said in thy heart, I am, and none else besides me.* And the Apostle to the Corinthians saith; *The world by wisdom knew not God.* Their great parts, natural and acquired, made them the more ignorant of God: *Willingly ignorant*, as St. Peter saith.

2. As some use their fine naturals, so others their neat morals against God: Their morality makes them to reason against thorow convictions of sin, and against deep humiliation for sin; and they are loath to leave their own righteousness to take sanctuary

Quary at Christs; their morals fill them with self-esteem, to think of themselves as that Pharisee said of himself, *Luke 18.11. God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men, or even as this Publican; I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I possess.*

Moral men are apt to dote upon self-righteousness like the Jews; of whom it's said, *They being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God.* There is a Meiosis in the last sentence, a gentler word is used than might have been; for whereas he saith, *they have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God*, he means they have zealously opposed it. Rom. 10.3.

3. There are many who abuse their health, and wealth, and strength, and beauty, and dignity, and turn all against God. When he gave *Israel* Corn and Oyl, and Wine, and multiplied their Silver and Gold, *they prepared it for Baal*; or made the Idol *Baal* of it. Natural men do usually make all the kindness which the Lord sheweth them, to be fewel for their lusts; they *spend all upon their lusts*, Hos. 2.8. as *St. James* saith. James 4.3.

That *goodness of God* which should lead them to repentance, keeps them from it, and hardens them against it. Rom. 2.4.

4. Natural men are too apt to turn God's Ordinances and means of grace against him; as the Scribes and Pharisees would *neither go into the Kingdom of Heaven themselves, nor suffer those that were entering to go in.* Christ's offers of himself to many men make them resist the more; *All*
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Rom. 10. 21.

the day long have I stretched out my hands unto a gainsaying people.

5. They turn his greatest deliverances God hath wrought for them against him ; *Jer. 7. 10. Ye come and stand before me in this House, which is called by my Name, and say, we are delivered to do all these abominations.*

Rom. 13.

6. Many imploy the power which God hath given them against his word, and ways, and people : this is plain, if we look upon many, if not most of the powers of the world ; God gives them power to be a terrour to evil works, and they make it a terrour to good.

Matth. 10. 18.

Our blessed Saviour foretold this to his Disciples, *Ye shall be brought before Governours and Kings for my sake ; and in the Synagogues ye shall be beaten.*

Mark 13.

And thus we see that God's goodness to many men makes them the worse ; they abuse his lovely attributes, as his mercy and patience, to more eagerness in sinning : *Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.*

Eccles. 8. 11.

Reasons

Reasons of the Point

1. Now this comes to pass from the exceeding sinfulneſs of ſin in men, inſomuch as ſin by the Commandment becomes exceeding ſinful; ſin was more exaſperated by the Commandment which was to reſtrain it. Some men are of ſuch a ſtrange conſtitution, that their Phyſick works quite contrary to the Phyſicians meaning; as it is a ſaying, That the Bee ſucks honey, but the *Spider* poiſon out of ſweet Herbs. O the vile and baſe nature of ſin!

Reaſ. 2. Becauſe men are prone to aſcribe to themſelves the good things they receive from God: *They ſaid not, where is the Lord that brought us up out of the Land of Egypt.* Men attribute that to their own power or parts, which belongs to God. This the Lord knew, when he would not let *Gideon* and *Iſrael* beat and conquer the *Midianites* with a great force; *Lest Iſrael vaunt themſelves againſt me, ſaying, Mine own hand hath ſaved me.*

And ſaith the Lord to the ſame people, *Deut. 8. 12, 14, 17. Beware leſt when thou haſt eaten, and art full, and haſt built goodly houſes, and thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy ſilver and thy gold is multiplied, then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of Egypt, &c. And then ſay in thine heart, My power, and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth.*

Application of the Point.

1. This tells us how little reason there is to exalt and magnifie the nature of man, and man's naturals in order to grace, as some men do. For man by nature is a most disingenuous Creature; he is prone to be worse towards God, by all the good that God does him. What the Lord said to Israel, he may say to all natural men very often, *Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? is not he thy father that hath bought thee? hath he not made thee, and established thee? Observe the ill requital; God was their Lord, their Father, their Maker, their Redeemer, their Establisher: And Israel was foolish, unwise, corrupt, perverse, and crooked.* So that there is more reason to debase, than exalt the nature of man, in his behaviour towards God and his grace. A disingenuous nature in man towards man sounds harsh; much more towards God. *What could I have done more for my Vineyard that I have not done? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? They tempted God, and provoked him at the Sea, even at the red Sea; where he wonderfully delivered them.*

A natural man is an unthankful Creature to God; this is one of his black marks, *unthankful*. This is his manner from his youth; he treads in the steps of unkind Israel: *I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians,* and

Deut. 32.6.

Isa. 54.

Mal. 106.7.

2 Tim. 3.2.

1 Sam. 10. 18,

19

and out of the hand of all Kingdoms, and of them that oppressed you: And ye have this day rejected your God, who himself saved you out of all your adversities, and your tribulations; yet ye have this day rejected your God.

It is said of *Amazia*, 2 Chron. 25. 14. That after God had given him a great victory over the *Edomites*, he brought their gods, and set them up to be his gods: A strange and sad requital of the strength which the Lord had lent him to conquer his enemies. And of *Uzziah* his Son it is said, That when God had marvellously helped him, till he was strong, *then his heart was lifted up, and he transgressed against the Lord his God.*

2 Chron. 26.
15, 16.

2. This bespeaks you all to observe and try your own spirits in this point. O if you, or any of you find upon observation, the goodness of God obliging to your hearts, and that you use to dedicate your Mercies to God, as *Hannah* did her Son; and your selves as well as your mercies, this is a good sign. Do you lay your selves below your mercies, as *Jacob* did? *I am less than the least of all thy mercies thou hast shewed unto thy servant:* And do you set God above your mercies, and above your selves also? *Let him do unto me what seemeth good unto him,* 2 Sam. 15. 26. And do you use to admire God when you see how mindful he is of you? saying in your hearts as *David* did, 2 Sam. 7. 18. *Who am I, O Lord God? or what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?* Now you may conclude that you have more than meer nature in you, that you have grace, which is of the Divine Nature, which begins to exert it self here, in the everlasting employment you shall have in heaven.

2 Sam. 3.
Rom. 12. 1.
Gen. 32. 10.

3. Yet because you are not all spirit and grace here, but have sinful flesh, and *the flesh lusting against the spirit*; therefore beware of the leaven of natural men, in turning God's goodness to you against him. Spiritual men may be carnal in some things: So good a man as *Hezekiah* may pride it after famous deliverances: And so holy a man as *Paul* may, if not prevented, be *exalted above measure, after the abundance of revelations*. And *David* may wax wanton and secure, when God hath made his mountain strong.

O take heed, Christians; if your Portion here make you proud, because it is great, or discontented because it is little, as you think it, be sure you shall come under Providences to humble you, and bring you to your selves. O let grace watch the corruption of nature, and use its power over it; for God giveth more grace, grace that is too strong for the corruption of nature; but if good days carry you from God, be sure that evil days shall bring you back.

C H A P. XIV.

Which sheweth, How unserviceable every man, in his natural estate, is to God; from the last Clause of the 13th. Verse,

And there wasted his Substance
with riotous living.

WE are come now to the last Clause of the 13th. Verse, what this younger Son did, when he came into the far Countrey; There he *wasted his substance with riotous living*: And the spiritual import of this will teach us many things.

And first, we may observe how this younger Son was worse than that wicked and slothful Servant that hid his Talent, *Matth. 25. 25.* Though he improved not his Masters goods, yet he did not waste them: But this youngster did; *He wasted his substance with riotous living*: From whence we may observe three several points of Doctrine; the first whereof shall be the subject of this Chapter, *viz.*

That

Doct. I.

That a natural man is an unprofitable and an unserviceable Creature to God.

He spoils all that goes through his hands; he pollutes the holy things of God, as those Jews did *Mul. 2. 7.* He ordinarily takes the name of God in vain by his carnal, careless, customary performances, and dough-baked duties; *Ephraim is a Cake half-baked.* And for the outward good things he hath of God; these he consumes upon his lusts; *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.* As the Gentile Nations had their several gods; so have natural men their several lusts; one pleasure, another pride, another covetousness, another intemperance, &c. Corruption of nature in natural men breaks out several ways in several persons, as corruption of the blood and humours of the body, break forth in one disease in one man, and in another disease in another. All natural men have their particular lusts, on which they spend their Father's substance.

Philem. 11.

Rom. 3. 12.

They are all like *Onesimus* before his Conversion, *unprofitable*; *They are together become unprofitable*, or rotten, as the Greek imports, and so good for nothing, as we say of a rotten Apple. It may be written on every natural man's grave, who lives and dies in that estate, *Here lieth the man that never did God one days good service in all his life*; but empty, and void, and waste: or if he did any good, it was to himself, and not to God.

Nahum 2. 10.

Zach. 7. 5.

Other Creatures are more usefull to man than natural men are to God: *The Ox knoweth his owner, and the Ass his Master's crib, but Israel doth not know* ——— *Balaam's Ass* was more serviceable to God, than *Balaam* himself; what service he did, he did it by force, as *Pharaoh* was forced to desire *Moses* his prayers, and to confess he had sinned, and to let *Israel* go.

Isa. 1. 3.

Numb. 6. 22.

Exod. 9. 27, 28.

Exod. 12.

It is true, God may, and doth make use of natural men sometimes in some special service: As he made use of *Cyrus* to do his good pleasure, in releasing the Jews, and returning them into their own Countrey, and in their laying the foundation of the Temple.

Isa. 44. 28.

So *Nebuchadnezzar* did the Lord a great peice of service against *Tyrus*, and he gave him *Egypt* for his hire: But alas, he intended no such thing as to do God service in the case, but satisfied his own ambition and lust.

Ezek. 29. 18, 19. 20.

As the *Assyrian* was the rod of God's anger to punish his sinning people; *Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so, but it is in his heart to destroy*, to serve his own pride and cruelty, and not the will of God. *Zenacherib* indeed pretended the service of God, when he came up against *Jerusalem*, and the Cities of *Judah*; *Am I come up without the Lord against this Land to destroy it? The Lord said unto me, go up and destroy it*: But alas, his end was to destroy the Jews, and the God of the Jews also, as he had done the Idol gods of other Nations: *Where are the gods of Hamath and Arphad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? and have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?*

Isa. 10. 7.

Isa. 36. 10.

Vers. 18, 19.

All

Zach. 7. 5.

¶ All the actions of natural men are from self-principles, and to self-ends; and the service they do God, is for and to themselves, as the Jews fasting seventy years was.

Reason.

Match. 21. 19.

And the Reason why natural men are unserviceable and useles Creatures to God is, because they are branches without a root; they are separated from God; they are in a far Countrey from God, as this Prodigal was from his Father: neither are they in Christ, branches in him. Now when branches are cut off from the Tree, they wither, and bear no fruit. Since the fall all men by nature are separated from God, which was signified by *Adam's* being thrust out of Paradise, *Gen. 3.* so that now men by

Job 19.

nature are like the fruitless Fig-tree which Jesus cursed: or they are that *wild Olive-tree* spoken of in *Rom. 11. 17.* If some natural men have the leaves of a Fig-tree, yet only leaves without fruit, as that Fig-tree was which our Lord Jesus cursed. Natural men may have moral vertues, and a profession of Religion; but *the root of the matter* is not in them, as *Job's* phrase is; that is, true grace, or the grace of sincerity.

2 & 3 Gen.

Gen. 3. 18.

As when the earth lost its blessing it was under at first, and came under a curse, in the second and third of *Genesis*, then it brought forth thorns and thistles; *Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee.* Thus is it with men since the fall, and still in a state of nature; they bring forth thorns and thistles to God, as the earth doth to man, whilst uncultivated.

Jer. 4. 3.

In the Prophet *Jeremiah* they are compared to fallow ground: The French call it *Jash'res* from the Latin *Jacere*, because it lieth idle, and brings not forth grain, but weeds, without the art of man.

Thus

Thus is it with natural mens hearts till grace alter them; they are fallow or idle ground, and bring not forth fruit to God: They are void and waste ground, as it's said of *Nineveh*, *Nahum* 2. 10.

Application.

1. This informs us of the excellency of a state of grace; in this state men are useful to God, not in strictness of speech, for God needs no man: *Can a man be profitable to God, as he that is wise may be to himself? If thou be righteous, what givest thou him?* Yet God is pleased to accept of his people as a useful people to him, *Vessels of honour sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared to every good work.* Job 22.2.
& 35.7.
2 Tim. 2.21.

As its said in *Psal.* 113.6. that the Lord *humbled himself, to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth*: so is the Lord pleased to humble himself in owning himself to have need of his people, as our Lord Jesus had his Disciples (if any asked about their loosing the Ass and the Colt) to say, *Matth.* 21.3. *The Lord hath need of them.*

It is true, all they do for him, or give to him, is of his own; *Thou hast wrought all our works for us.* Isa. 26.12.
And of thine own have we given thee. 1 Chro. 21.14.
Saints are useful Creatures to God. *O Lord, truly I am thy servant, I am thy servant,* says *David*. Psal. 116.16.
And as *David* said thus to God, so God said of *David*, *1 have found David a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will.* Acts 13.22.
Godliness is profitable to all things, *1 Tim.* 4. 8. *Godly men and wo-*

T

men

1 Chro. 12. 2.
Pfal. 37. 31.

2 Tim. 3. 17.

men are like those that came to *David* to *Ziklag*; they could use both the right hand and the left. When a man hath the Word of God in his heart, as every man in a state of grace hath, he is thoroughly furnished to every good work.

Gant. 4. 16.

The Saints are the Lord's *Eden*, they are his Garden, where he eats his pleasant fruit, and refresheth himself; we have the expression in *Exod. 31. 17*. Take heed therefore, you that have grace, that you fail not in your usefulness to God.

Isa. 56. 3.

2. This should humble natural men, if they had any sense and feeling of their state, that they should be so unserviceable and useles Creatures to God. Many a godly man, though he do bear fruit unto God; yet not bearing so good, and so much as he would, and thinks he should, he calls himself a *dry tree*; he cries out, *O my leanness, my leanness*.

Isa. 10. 7.

But natural men that are fallow ground, their soul is a wilderness, waste ground, an empty vine, or that *bringeth forth fruit only to himself*, as it's said of *Israel*: he is his own *Alpha* and *Omega*, beginning and end; and yet he hath no sense of his great sin and disingenuity herein.

CHAP. XV.

Sheweth, that a natural man is an unprofitable Creature to himself. The several Uses that are to be made hereof. And how the Sins of Self-will and Self-seeking, the great Causes hereof, may be known; from the same Clause of the 13th. Verse,

**And there wasted his Substance
with riotous living.**

I Have done with the first Doctrine from this last Clause of the 13. Verse, *viz. That a natural man is an unprofitable and unserviceable Creature to God.* I proceed to a second from the same words, which is this,

*That a natural man is an unprofitable Creature Doct. 2.
to himself, as well as to God.*

*He wasteth his Substance in a far Countrey. No
T 2 natural*

Prov. 9. 12.

Luke 16. 8.

natural man is wise for himself; he may be wise in his time, as the World counts wisdom. Our Saviour saith, *The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light; i. e. in their contrivances for the things of this world.*

Mark 8. 36.

Heb. 12. 25.

2 Sam. 2. 26.

But this is wisdom from beneath, such as the Serpent is, and teacheth: For indeed no man is truly wise for himself, who is not wise and a forecaster for eternity; *What will it profit a man to gain the whole world, and to lose his own soul?* And as are his profits, such are his pleasures; *the pleasures of sin for a season: They will be bitterness in the end,* as *Joab* said of the Sword.

Philem.

John 8.

Rev. 3. 17.

Gen. 3.

Jer. 20.

Hos. 12. 1.

Whatever natural men possess, health or wealth, or parts, or power, yea, or means of grace, they use them not to their true advantage in the end: When their accounts are cast up, it will be found that all is wasted, they have laid up nothing for their eternal comfort, but die infinitely in God's debt: and unless mercy and free grace forgive them and God put their debt on Christ's account, as *Paul* did *Onesimus* his, on his own, they must lie in prison for ever. Every man that dies in his natural state, *dieth in his sins*; he dieth poor, and miserable, and naked: as our first Parents when they had sinned; they saw themselves naked within as well as without; they saw a strange sight of themselves; they were afraid of themselves, as well as of God; they were *Magor-missabib*, as *Pashur* was, *a terrour to themselves*; so will all natural men be, dying such.

They labour in the fire; they sow folly, and reap misery; they feed upon the wind, and at length the Lord speaks to them out of the whirl-wind;

They

They shall eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. Prov. 1.31.

Those of them that make a fair shew in the world, their glut of these worldly things will prove a deadly surfeit to them, as *Israels* fill of flesh did to them. Numb. 11. 20.
Death is in the pot of every natural man; and all their plenty and pleasure here will in the end be like that *Manna* which the *Israelites* kept till morning, which rotted and stank. Psal. 106. 15. Exod. 16. 20.

Reason of the Doctrine.

Now the Reason why natural men are unprofitable Creatures to themselves is, because their selves, and the satisfying of their lusts, is the beginning and end of all their seekings and gettings. What God gives them, they use not to him, but to themselves, to feed their pride, or covetousness, or intemperance, or revenge: Some lusts or other are fed with all they have.

As whatever a man or woman eats that hath an Ulcer or Cancer in their bodies, feeds those sores; so does a natural man's estate, power, pleasure, yea his profession of Religion, all feed his lusts.

Natural mens lusts are their rule and their end; they *fashion themselves according to their lusts*. It is natural to men to do that which is good in their own sight. 1 Pet. 1. 14. Judges 17. 6.
Nothing will be restrained from them that they have imagined, as the Lord said of the builders of *Babel*, if they may have their own wills. Gen. 11. 6.
They say as *Pharaoh*, *Our lusts shall be satisfied*, Exod. 15. 9.

Now.

Now when a man's own lusts are his rule and his end in all, God will curse and blast all his works and ways in the end; he will not give his glory to another, nor his will neither. Therefore did not the Lord make any account of the Jews their seventy years fasting in Captivity, because they fasted not to him, but to themselves. This Prodigal in the Text was all for himself, and his own lusts, nothing for his Father, or his Father's house; he was for a far Countrey, and there he wasted and consumed all.

At first man would have had a parity with God, *ye shall be as gods* — O this took much with them. This was *Lucifer's* language, *I will be like the most high*. It is spoken of the Babylonian Monarch; yea, man hath pride enough in his nature to prefer himself above God, to think himself wiser than God, and juster than God. As a King of *Spain* said, as History tells us, *That if he had been at the Creation, he could have ordered some things better.*

How did *Sennacharib* exalt himself above the Lord! *Who are they among all the gods of these lands, that have delivered their land out of my hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?* He thought himself of more might than the Almighty. Thus is man by nature great in his own eye, and his own way good, yea the best; and hereupon he is so good a friend to himself, as to undo himself; *Thy way and thy doings have procured thee these things.*

Application.

1. This shews us the sad Condition of meer natural men, in that their wit, and wealth, and honour, and all their contrivances dwindle away into vanity, as fire doth into smoke; as that rich fool's Barns did, when it was said unto him, *Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee.* They find at the end, that their accounts fall altogether short of their expectations; their disappointments amaze them, like theirs Hag. 1.6. *Ye have sown much, and brought in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages, earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.* Poor natural man, he chooseth his own ways, but to his own confusion: As Saul said to his son Jonathan, *Thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion.* At last, if his condition change not, he will say of all his possessions, and parts, and projects, and pleasures, as Haman did of all his, *All this availeth me nothing.* All falls into a little gelly, as Star-like Meteors in the Air do. So unprofitable a Creature is a natural man to himself; he is ignorant of the true riches, and so hath cheated himself with a meer phantasm of happiness, as the holy Ghost calls Agrippa's and his Queens great pomp in which they came into the Court, they entred *in multis paratis, with great phancy.*

Luke 12. 20.

1 Sam. 20. 30.

Esth. 5. 13.

Acts 25. 23.

2. Learn we hence, what a destructive thing it is to men to walk in their own ways, to make themselves and their lusts the rule and end of their practice. This young man had much ruined himself this way. It was God's heavy Judgment on the world of the Gentiles, when he suffered them to walk in their own ways: and it was the like Judgment on the Jews, when *he gave them up to their own hearts lust, and they walked in their own counsels.* This self-will and self-endedness is the plague of most mens hearts, even in these last days. ----- *Mens shall be lovers of their own selves, and lovers of pleasure, or their own lust, more than of God.* O this self in our actions natural, civil, or religious, consumes all our good: It is to mens most specious conversations and accomplishments, as the worm was to *Jonah's* Gourd, withers all.

There may be leaves, but no fruit, when gathering time comes. This is the reason why many, when they come to die, have so little comfort, yea so much discouragement in the reflections they make on their lives.

3. Therefore in the third place, this point serves to Instruction. If you would be wise for your selves, and reap profit and comfort from your ways, keep corrupt self out of doors; else all the good you think you do for your selves will be your death, as that part of *Ananias* his goods he kept back from the Church was his. O learn and labour to have God in your eye, and to interest him above your selves in all your ways and undertakings, and then you'll make something of them; you will be sure to have your share in the fruit. Nothing will be lost this way, no not that which may seem to be lost;

Acts 14.16.

Psal. 81.12.

2 Tim. 3.2,4.

Acts 5.5.

lost; *He that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it.* Mark 10. 39.

We count what we lay out in Land is not wasted, we shall have comings in by it; but what men or women lay out in intemperance in Meat, and Drink, and Apparel, that vanisheth into nothing, or worse. Thus so much of our time, and gifts, and estate we lay out for, and to God, will be as Land and Substance to us; we shall have our comings in that will exceed our layings out: But all we lay out on our lusts, it is consumed; and all we lay out meerly for self-ends, is all waste. There may be the profits and *pleasures of sin for a season*, as *Heb. 11.* but in the end we shall meet with the sting of the Bee; and all, like *Moses's Rod*, will turn into a Serpent. And

Consider first, If your selves be your rule and end in your ways, you are not for God's use, and so he'll lay you aside; he will esteem you as broken Vessels, wherein is no pleasure, as he did *Coniah*; Jer. 22. 28. *The Lord sets apart the man that is godly for himself.* The man that will eye God, and concern God in all he does, this is *a man after God's heart*, as *Acts 23. 22.* *David* was. Psal. 4.

If a Vessel into which you put Bear, sours or distasts it, you'll lay it by till it be sweeter, and use another. Why did God repent that he had made *Saul* King? because he saw he was for himself in his ways and actions, and not for God. Yea, 1 Sam. 15.

2. While men make themselves their rule and their ends in their actions, in their particular Callings, or Profession of Religion, they set themselves in God's room; and how will God take this? We see how God took our first Parents attempting to be as gods.

Exod. 4. 17. God may make one man to be instead of God to another in some sense; as he made *Moses to Aaron*; but no man may be instead of God to himself, which he is, while his own will is his rule, and himself is the chief end of his works and ways.

Prov. 16. 4. All God's own actions are for himself, because there is none above himself, or like himself. God's holiness and righteousness lies much in willing his own glory; for he should do himself wrong if he should give it to another, there being none besides himself capable of it. And so our holiness and righteousness lies much in improving all we are or have to and for God chiefly; none of our actions may terminate in any created being; they may not fall short of God and his glory, as their main scope. As *Joab* would have *David*, and not himself to have the honour of taking *Rabbah*: so should we do by God; He is all in all in heaven, and so he should be on earth.

3. The meanest of actions that have God for their bias and mark, hereby become glorious actions; and as mean as they be to the eye of the world, if it be but *the giving a cup of cold water*—— Christ will have as great care such actions shall not be lost, as he had of the fragments of the miraculous bread and fish with which he fed many thousands; he would have all gathered up, and none lost. A reward in heaven is the fruit the meanest actions bear which are thus terminated: They are more glorious things in the eye of God than an Angel's tongue, or a faith of Miracles. These are actions that will follow their Agents to heaven; such actions and works as are wrought in God, and for God, will follow a man to God; *his works shall follow him*: They do not

not go before him, to make way for him; Christ's works alone have this honour: but they shall certainly follow him, and *be to praise, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ*; as St. Peter ^{1 Pet. i. 7.} saith of the faith of Saints.

The Reason why I am so large on this matter is, because a man's dedicating his ways and works to his own will and end, is the reason, as you have seen, why natural men are so unprofitable Creatures to themselves.

Quest. But how shall we know whether God or *Quest.* our selves be our main rule and end in all our ways and actions?

Ans. 1. Observe what it is that puts you upon good actions, and that sweetens your labour and pains therein: If your own credit, or profit, or other outward self-advantages, then your selves are your main end, and not God: But if the will of God, and glory of God, pleasing of God, and injoying of God bear sway, and be the wings that carry you on; not your selves, but God is your supream end: As the pains that the people took in *Psal.* 84. in going from all parts of the Land to *Jerusalem*, was to *meet God in Zion.*

2. Observe where you mostly look for reward in your religious and good works. If from men, you are your own ends: if from God, God is your end, especially if you look at God himself for your reward. The Nurse looks not for a reward of her care from the Child, but the Mother: And so when you look for your reward from God, and not men, you quit your selves from the Spirit of an hypocritical Pharisee, and have an argument for your sincerity, and that God is your mark and motive. ^{Gen. i. 5. 2.}

3. Observe what it is wherein thy heart resteth it self in thy passage through this world: If it be for that thou hast estate enough, or repute with men enough, or a sufficiency of other flesh-pleasing circumstances, it is a sign thou art thine own end; like that rich man in the Gospel, who sang to himself, Soul, take thine ease, thou hast much goods laid up for many years: but if thou hast no hearts ease longer than thou hast God's presence, or retest upon him, and art laying out thy self in his service, and for his glory, thou maist reckon upon it that God is thy great end. This was the great content of Christ's heart, *That he did always the things that pleased his Father* and, *Father, I have glorified thee on earth.*

Luke 12.

John 8. 29.

John 17. 4.

Heb. 1. 4.

Joh. 12. 27, 29.

Our Lord Jesus, even as the Son of man, was much better than the Angels; yet not his own, but his Fathers will was his rule, *John 6. 39.* and his Fathers glory his high end; *What shall I say? Save me from this hour. Father, glorify thy Name.* This was the comfort of Jesus Christ, when he went out of this world; *Father, I have glorified thee on earth.*

O my Brethren, this is one of the greatest points in religion, to look what is your great end in Religion, and in all your conversation in this World, your selves or God: if your selves, you will have a blast on all you do; do you never so much, you do but waste your Substance your Father hath given you, as this younger Son did; *You labour for that which satisfieth not.* But if God be your motive and your end, you may be sure you labour not in vain, nor spend your strength for nought, for *your judgment is with the Lord, and your reward with your God.*

Isa. 55. 2.

Isa. 49. 4.

Here.

Here is the excellency of grace, that it lifts up your eyes much to God: as it's the excellency of man's body above that of other living Creatures, in being made erect; his own figure teaching him to lift his eyes and thoughts up to heaven. Look upon it as an evidence and excellency of grace in your souls, that they are thereby much carried up to God; *Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul*, was much in David's mouth. And it was the use of our Lord Jesus *to lift up his eyes to heaven*, Job. 17. 1. **11. 41.**

Psal. 25. 1.
Psal. 86. 4.
Psal. 143. 8.

CHAP.

C H A P. XVI.

*Sheweth, that when men forsake God,
he gives them up to the height of
sinning ; from the same Clause,*

*And there wasted his Substance
with riotous living.*

TH E R E is yet a third Doctrine from this
last Clause of the Thirteenth Verse,
viz.

Doct. 3. *That when men depart from God, and cast off
his fear and counsel, then he gives them up
to the height of sinning.*

When this younger Brother got from under his Father's eye into a far Countrey, there he lived in all excess of riot ; he lived riotously. And what a life that is, St. Peter tells us ; a living in *lasciviousness, lust, excess of wine, revellings, &c.* This was the case of the Jews, when they hearkened not to the Lord's voice, and would have none of him, he then
 1 Pet. 4 3, 4. *gave them up to their own hearts lust——*
 Psal. 81. 11, 12.

We see the case also exemplified in the Gentiles,
 Rom. 1. 24, 26, 28. when they regarded not God, nor liked to retain
 him

him in their knowledge, he gave them up to *uncleanneſſ* through the luſts of their own hearts, and unto *wile affections*, and unto a *reprobate mind*, to do *thoſe things which are not convenient*. As *Ahab ſold himſelf to work wickedneſſ*, 2 Kings 21. And others gave themſelves over to laſciviousneſſ, to work all uncleannefeſſ with greedineſſ, being *led captive by the Devil at his will*, 2 Tim. 2.

Eph. 4.19.

2 Tim. 2.26.

And ſuch men are within a few ſteps of the ſtate of the Devils, becauſe they ſin wilfully and greedily: There is not only their will in their ſinning, but wilfulneſſ and obſtinacy. *As for the word thou haſt ſpoken to us in the Name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee; but we will certainly do whatſoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouths*. It's true, that not only natural men, but ſuch who have grace, do ſin; but not ſuch ſins as theſe ſin, nor any ſins in ſuch a manner. A godly man may ſin a great and groſſ ſin, but he is tempted to it, and overtaken with it. It was *Satan* that *provoked David to number the people*, 1 Chro. 21.1. And *Satan ſifted Peter* when he fell ſo foully.

Jer. 44. 16, 17.

Gal. 6.2...

Luke 22.

And beſides, they greatly afflict their ſouls for ſuch ſins: *David watered his Couch with his tears*, and writ many penitential Pſalms; and *Peter wept bitterly*. I, but natural men, eſpecially thoſe who are given up to their own luſts by the juſt Judgment of God, they ſin almoſt any ſins with delight; *They rejoyce to do evil, and delight in the frowardneſſ of the wicked, that will not endure any reproof*; as many in theſe looſe times rejoyce to make men, and ſee men drunk. And the Apoſtle in the firſt to the *Romans*, v. 29, 30, 31. ſpeaking of the moſt dreadful ſins committed by men, ſpeaks of men that *not only*

Mark 26.

Prov. 2.14.

do

do them, but take pleasure in them that do them.

1 Joh. 2.8.

Now the more will and affection there is for sin, the more sinful it is. It is more the manner, than matter of sin, that shews the state of the heart. Sin considered simply is not the brand of a reprobate; for none of the Elect are without sin in this life. It's willing and wilful sinning that denotes a wicked man. If the greatest sinner be upon the returning point to God, sin will not damn him; *Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin.*

Ezek. 18.30.

Application.

1. This may be for a lamentation, that in our times there are so many desperate sinners that waste their Substance, not only their wealth, but their health, their parts and places, and all the Lord hath intrusted them with, they waste all in riotous living. Do we see great men great sinners? we have no need to envy their greatness, but to pity their great sinfulness and folly. Such practical Atheists St. Paul speaks of to Titus 2. 16. *They profess they know God, but in works they deny him, being abominable and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.* And because they profess to know God, and Christ, and the Scriptures, their sin is the greater, as Christ said to the Jews.

2. This may much move you to admire and bless the Lord, whose will, and affections, and content, is taken off from all sin. It's as great a mercy, as that all your sins are forgiven you; for both are parts of the

the Covenant of grace. O look on it as mercy when God hedges up your way, when you are going out of his. Hof. 2. 7.

Art thou fearful when thou sinnest? bless God for so much mercy. Doth thy heart smite thee when thou hast sinned? bless God that sense of sin is not taken from thee. Hath God took away pleasure from thy sinning? bless God thou art so far delivered from sin. How many sinners are past feeling, and given up to a reprobate mind in sinning?

Quest. But may not such a sinner be converted?

Answer. It is not impossible; the case is very dangerous, though not utterly desperate. Conversion hath been the happy lot of the worst of Heathens; and Publicans and Harlots were converted, and believed. But when men pretend to know God, and to believe in Christ, and yet are greedy sinners, and sin without feeling, their case is more hopeless, and they are very near that heavy sentence, *He that is filthy, let him be filthy still.* But when men come to feel a bitterness in sin, and their conscience cannot bear with it, there is now some hope. Thus much for the the thirteenth Verse.

Matth. 21. 31.
32.

Rev. 22. 11.

C H A P. XVII.

*Wherein is shewed, That great pain
and sorrow do always follow the
pleasures of sin. With Meditati-
ons hereupon by way of Use; from
the fourteenth Verse,*

*And when he had spent all, there
arose a mighty Famine in that
Land, and he began to be in
want.*

IN the former Verse this younger Son, the Pi-
cture of every man by Nature, acted his part
in sin; and in these Verses we see him acting
his part in sorrow: there we saw his *bravery*,
here his *misery*. And here let us consider,

1. His misery it self in the fourteenth Verse;
*And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty
Famine in that Land; and he began to be in
want.*

2. The Course he took for his relief, in the fif-
teenth Verse; *And he went and joyned himself to a
Citizen.*

Citizen of that Countrey: and he sent him into his field to feed Swine.

3. The Ineffectualness of that Course in order to his relief, in the sixteenth Verse; *And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks which the Swine did eat, and no man gave unto him.*

First, Of his distress and misery we have here expressed a double occasion; 1. *He had spent all;* and 2. *There arose a mighty Famine in that Land.* He was distressed within and without: Within, for he had nothing of his own left; he had spent all his Substance, his whole Portion; all was gone: And without also; there was a Famine in the Land whither he was rambl'd from his Father's House; so that he was straitned on all hands. Though there had been a famine, if he had had something of his own, his case had been tolerable; or though he had nothing of his own, had there not been a Famine in the Land, he might have had hopes of supply: but he is every way distressed, as those Lepers were. *If we say, we will go into the City, the Famine is there,* 2 Kings 7: *and there we shall die: and if we sit still, we die also.* And observe, It is said, *there arose, or began, a mighty Famine in the Land; and he began to be in want.* All his straits were but the beginning of sorrow, as Christ said, when he had spoken of many sore evils that would befall *Judea and Jerusalem; All these are the beginnings of sorrow:* So was it with this man's straits; for like the flood, *they increased, and prevailed mightily day after day,* Gen. 7. The misery of graceless men hath a beginning, but no end, if free grace dispose not otherwise of it in their conversion, as it did in this Prodigal's Case. But we come to the spiritual things

which this part of the Parable means and intends.

1. This intimates to us, That great pain and sorrow follows the pleasures of sin: first he spent all his Substance upon his lust; and then he was in want, and hedged in with straits.

2. It intimates to us, That when men leave God to shift for themselves in this evil World (which is a far Countrey from God) they shall find a Famine therein; i. e. they shall find no satisfaction in the Creature: Let them have never so great a Portion, they shall have no satisfaction.

The first of these shall be the subject of this Chapter, viz.

Doct. 1.

That great pain and sorrow follows the pleasures of sin.

Heb. 11. 25.

The sweet of sin is but for a season, and ends in bitterness, as *Joab* said of the Sword. Sin's best will be soon spent, and then comes its worst; but this is not gone so quickly. The Bee hath a sting as well as honey: There is a core in the forbidden Fruit, that will stick in a man's throat when he has eaten it. The pleasures of sin are not immortal things, but very flashes, and they go out like a Candle, with a stinking snuff. Roses stay not always on the Tree, but are gathered, or wither, and shed, and then they leave prickles behind them.

Gen. 3.

The pleasantness of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge was soon gone from *Adam* and *Eve*, and changed into nakedness, and fears, and amazement. When the affections have acted their part in sin, then sin acts its part on the Conscience: yea when the pleasing affections, love, desire, delight, have had their

their time in sin, then the bitter affections, grief, and sorrow, and vexation, have their season, and that for ever with many; *Cain*, and *Amnon*, and *Judas* are examples.

While *Belsazzar* was drinking Wine in the golden Vessels of the Temple, he saw that *hand-writing on the wall*, which made his countenance change, and his thoughts trouble him, and all his joints to tremble. Sin will punish and plague men when they have spent their love upon it; *Thine own wickedness shall correct thee.* Dan. 5. 31. 5. 6

And though a man have a long day of the pleasure of sin, yet that day will have a night; and if bitter repentance prevent not, that night will never have day more after it. As the Saints in heaven have no night, so the damned in hell have no day, but utter darkness. The pains of sin have a longer season than the pleasures. *Rejoyce, O young man,* Rev. 21. 24.
in thy youth, or youthful lusts, saith the Preacher, Matth. 8. 12.
and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth,
and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight
of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all these
things God will bring thee to judgment. Eccles. 11. 9.

And Eccles. 8. 11. *Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet it shall not be well with the wicked. And wo unto the wicked, it shall not be well with him; for the reward of his hands shall be given to him: that is,* Isa. 3. 11.
God's unavoidable doom, Rom. 2. 9. Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil.
The end of these things is death. Rom. 6.

If men might have the pleasures of sin on earth, and after have the pleasures of God in heaven, the Scriptures would be disproved, and Christ should die

die in vain, and the Law curse sinners in vain, and upon the matter, God would be found a lyar; he that believeth not God *hath made him a lyar*. And what a heap of blasphemies would these suppositions rise to?

Nay, if a righteous man should return to the pleasures of sin, God hath professed *that he should die, and not live*. If a righteous man could do the one, God would do the other. If Angels sin, they must not stay in heaven, but be damned. All the world cannot forbid the banas between the pleasures of sin and eternal sorrow, unless Conversion alter the case.

If *David* will have the pleasure of sin, he must have the pain of it too; his *flesh must wither, and his bones be broken; and his soul must be vexed in him*.

It's true, that our dear Lord Jesus Christ hath taken off the sorrows of sin from the Saints so far, as they are mortal; but not so far as they are medicinal. Though they are kept out of hell, yet they may be brought to the borders. Though the *Canaanites* shall not hinder *Israels* possessing of the good Land, yet they may give them great disturbance. It is convenient that sin should end in sorrow in the Elect in this life, that they may taste what sorrow Christ felt for their sins; and what sorrows the damned do, and shall feel there; that so they may learn to set a high price and value upon the pardon of their sins, and their escape from condemnation. O when a godly man's Conscience comes to feel the bitter that follows the sweet of any sin, this makes him a great admirer of the free grace of God.

Application.

1. Let this be for a lamentation, That the world, yea much of the Christian world, should be so sottish as to buy the pleasures of sin for a season at such an excessive dear rate, as the hazard of eternal pains. This is like *Esau's* selling his birth-right for a mess of Pottage. How can such men read or hear the Scripture in *Job 21. 13.* if they believe it, without horror? *They spend their days in mirth* (so it is in the Margent) *and suddenly, or in a moment, go down into the grave;* and it may be into hell one part, before into the grave the other.

Satan is the *Prince of this world*, and the god of this world by usurpation; and he rewards his Subjects with the pleasures of this world, and lusts of this world, to fit them to be tormented with himself in the next. As *Abraham* said to *Dives*, *Remember, that in thy life time thou hadst thy good things*, the pleasures of this world; *but now thou art tormented.* John 14. 30.
2 Cor. 4. 4.
Luke 16. 25.

The Devil could not tempt Christ with all the Kingdoms of the world; but he tempts thousands with the base lusts of the world: He puts many tricks and cheats upon poor sinners. He lessens and sweetens sin before, and in the act; but greatens and imbitters it afterwards.

He troubles not for sin before he have tempted men to it, and then he often falls on the Conscience, as he did on *Cain's*; *Mine iniquity is greater than can be forgiven;* and *the punishment of my sin is greater.* Gen. 4. 13.

greater than I can bear. Sin may be sweet in the swallow, as some Vomits are ; but then it torments when it is in the stomach, and brings up bitter stuff: But here is the misery of it, that men will not believe till they feel, as *Thomas* his unbelief said ; *except I feel, and see, I will not believe.* Those that tell men of these things, they seem to them as mockers, as *Lot* did to his Sons in Law, and say in their hearts as those scoffing Jews at the Prophets threatening their sins with judgments; *Let him make speed, and hasten his work, that we may see it; and let the counsel of the holy one of Israel draw nigh, and come, that we may know it.*

It hath been an old practice of sinners to flatter themselves in the fulfilling their lusts ; *I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine own heart. He flattereth himself in his own eyes, till his iniquity be found to be hateful,* *Psal. 36. 2.* Our blessed Saviour saith, that in the days before the flood, *they were eating and drinking, &c. and knew not till the flood came, and took them all away. And knew not!* Did not Noah forewarn them many years ? Yes, but they did not regard or believe him, till they saw it : *Whoredome, and wine, and new wine, took away their hearts, and reason, and senses. Thus men compass themselves about with lies, and with the sparks of their own fire ;* with their own fond reasonings and vain hopes. But what saith God to them ? *This ye shall have at my hands, ye shall lie down in sorrow.*

St. Paul reckons this amongst the sins of the last times or days ; *Men shall be lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.* They let their own lusts take place of God in their hearts. What is it to be
lovers

John 20.

Gen. 19. 14.

Isa. 5. 19.

Deut. 29. 19.

Matth. 24.

Hos. 4. 11.

Hos. 11. 12.

Isa. 50. 11.

2 Tim. 3. 4.

lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God, but to follow a man's own lusts, rather than the will of God? When a man's pleasures take him off, or put him by any duty that God commands him, why now he loves his pleasure more than God: It's a plain conviction in the case.

For as *Faith works by love*, Gal. 5. 6. so love worketh by obedience. *If ye love me keep my Commandments.* So that when men will break through a Command of God to take their own pleasure, now they are *lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God*. But, *O ye simple ones, how long will ye love simplicity?* O turn ye at this days reproof; It's infinitely better to grieve and afflict your souls for sin, than to take pleasure in it. O sorrow for sin at present, that ye may not sorrow by it for ever; unless you do the former, you must do the latter; unless you do sorrow, you shall sorrow, as he said, *Periissem, nisi periissem*, I had been undone, if I had not been undone. Seek then to sorrow for sin with sorrow that is to conversion, that ye may escape sorrow for sin that will be to your confusion.

Let me put this Question to every such person that takes pleasure in their lusts that count it pleasure to riot in the day time; sporting themselves with their own deceivings; making provision for the flesh.

Let me ask these that question which was asked those Oppressors in Isa. 10. 3. *What will ye do in the day of Visitation? Do ye think to escape the Judgment of God?* Rom. 2. 3. You must feel the bitter of sin, as well as the sweet: If I have done so and so, saith Job; *What shall I do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him?*

him? And if *Job* cannot, how canst thou? Thou wilt have nothing within or without to speak a good word for thee.

2 Sam. 13.

Thy affections will lothe the things that thou didst lust after, as *Amnon* did. And thy memory will be wormwood and gall to thee, as theirs was, *Lam.* 3. 19. And thy Conscience will vex and trouble thee; it will be the Executioner of God's displeasure upon thee for thy pleasure taken, and sinful ways.

John 12. 48.

And that Word of God which thou despisedst and rejectedst, will judge thee. And thy Companions in evil, that were wont to encourage and drill thee on to evil, they'll say to thee, as the High Priest did to *Judas* in his agony of Conscience, *I have betrayed innocent blood; Caveat emptor; what's that to us? See thou to that.*

Mark 27.

Yea, every thing that thou expectedst relief from in the day of thy sorrow, and bitterness of thy soul, all will say to thee, as the King of *Israel* did to that Widow which cried out, *Help, O King: If the Lord do not help thee, whence should I help thee?*

2 Kings 6.

And again, to take every man off from taking pleasure in sin, in sin that offers the most, let a man consider this, That there is more real evil in sin that appears most pleasing, than there is in all the sorrows and miseries of the world: therefore *Moses* chose rather to suffer afflictions, even the greatest tribulations with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin; And other Saints have chosen the greatest torments imaginable, rather than sin, or a sinful escape from them, *verse* 35, 36, 37.

Heb. 11. 25.

And our Lord Jesus Christ, who was willing to be a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, *Isa.* 53. 1. yea, to be made a curse, and to suffer the wrath of God, which was hell to his soul, so long as it lasted, and all to save his people from their sins: yet would he not have done the least sin himself, to have kept them from hell; *Who did no sin*, *2 Pet.* 2. 22. and *knew no sin* (i. e.) by experience in himself: The former text explains the latter. He was willing to bear all their sins upon him, *1 Pet.* 2. 24. but would not have the least of sin in him. *The Prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.* Mark 1.
2 Cor. 5. 21.
John 14. 30.

And so holy *Paul* groaned more under the weight of sin, than of all his sufferings; when in *2 Cor.* 11. 23.---- he had numbred them to a great sum; *In stripes above measure; in prisons more frequent; in death oft*— yet he could glory in these, *verse* *30.* and take pleasure in them, as brave Souldiers do in their scars, as badges of honour. But when he speaks of sin that dwelleth in him, he groans grievously; *O wretched man that I am*— 2 Cor. 12. 11.
Rom. 7. 24.

A Saint is not well pleased with any sin, nor does he at any time rejoice in sin, as he usually doth in his sufferings for well-doing; as *Moses chose rather to suffer affliction, than to enjoy the pleasure of sin*, *Heb.* 11. 25. Sin of it self is misery; as God in himself is blessedness. There is bitterness in sin, as well as for sin. It is bitterness to the people of God, abstracted from its punishment; *Mine iniquities are a burthen too heavy to bear.* Psal. 38. And sin is bitter to God himself: That in *Lam.* 2. 18. *I have rebelled against his Commandment*, may be read, I have made bitter his mouth. So in *Deuteronomy*, *Their* Lam. 2. 18.
De ut. 32. 32.

grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter: Their Vine was their sinful nature; and their grapes their sinful works; and these were bitter to God, to speak, as himself doth, after the manner of men.

There is more evil in sin, than in the punishment of it. Indeed sin it self is the greatest punishment that God inflicteth on sinners in this World: Because those Heathens sinned so greatly, therefore, as a punishment, *God gave them up to vile affections, and to a reprobate mind.* Their latter sins were the punishment of their former, without any unrighteousness in God: And therefore when the Apostle had spoken of Gods punishment God inflicted on them for their sins, *viz.* his giving them over to sin, he saith of it, *in 2d.* it was that which was meet; *receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet,* in the 27th. verse. O how great is the evil of sin, when God makes sin the highest punishment of sin out of hell? *Because they received not the love of the truth; for this cause God shall send them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie.*

Quest. But how can men take pleasure in sin, if sin be the greatest punishment of sin in this life?

Ans. Because whilst they are under the power of sin, it is no burthen to them, but pleasure: As a man that swims or dives under the water, feels it not a burthen, but pleasure to him; whereas if he went out of the water, the tenth part of that water on his shoulders would make him groan, and sink him down. And so when a man is delivered from under the dominion of sin, as he is when he cometh into a state of grace, those sins which were easie and pleasant to him before grace, are now the greatest trouble and vexation.

You

You see then how little reason men have to phan-
sy pleasure in sin, or to reckon themselves happy
when they may have their lusts; let not therefore
our eyes dazzle at the men of this world, that have
their fill of the pleasures of sin, and have liberty and
opportunity to fulfill their lusts. It was *Asaph's* in- Psal. 73. 12, 13.
firmity, and *Jeremiah's* too, to be troubled in their Jer. 12. 12.
minds at such a sight.

Alas, all their pomps is but a phantasy, as *St. Paul*
saith of that of *Agrippa* and *Berenice*; so it is in the Acts 25. 28.
Greek: All is but a vain shew; as is a Dream when Psal. 39.
one awaketh; So, O-Lord, *when thou awakest thou* Psal. 73. 20.
shalt despise their image. Dreams of honour, and
pleasures, and riches, are not real, but imaginary
things; men find it so when they awake out of their
dreams.

Thus doth God make all these mens delight and
pleasure in their lusts, the lusts of the flesh, the lusts 1 John 2. 16.
of the eye, and the pride of life to be but imagi-
nary delights in their own sense and experience,
when he awakens to Judgment, and awakens their
Consciences unto Judgment.

We should therefore tremble at their courses, as
well as their ends. So did holy *Paul* at their de-
baucheries he speaks of in *Philip. 3. 19.* *Many walk*
of whom I have told you often, and now tell you
weeping, that they are enemies to the Cross of Christ,
whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and
whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly
things.

These men seem like to *Leviathan*, made without Job 41. 33.
fear; they laugh at mens threatnings, and God's
threatnings for sin; as *Leviathan* is said to do at the
shaking of a Spear. These *spend their days in sinful* Job 41. 20.
mirth,

Job 21.

mirth, and in a moment go down to the grave, or to hell. They have pleasure and mirth no where but on earth; not in the grave, for that is darkness and silence; not in hell, there is nothing but weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth; and they are sure to have none in heaven, for no unclean thing comes there. O that these would remember what

Luke 16.

Father Abraham said to Dives; Son, remember that thou in thy life time hadst thy good things, but now thou art tormented. Sins that have been sweet to the affections, will be bitter at length to the Conscience:

Rev. 10.

As St. John's Book was sweet in his mouth, but bitter in his belly. O happy were men, if God did hedge

Hof. 2. 6, 7.

Gen. 3.

up the way from the pleasures in sin, as he did the way of the Tree of Life from man by a flaming Sword.

C H A P. XVIII.

Manifesting, That whenever men set their hearts upon the things of this world, God makes them all empty and unsatisfactory to them: The several ways God takes to bring this to pass: And what use we are to make hereof; from the same fourteenth Verse,

And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty Famine in that Land, and he began to be in want.

I Have done with the first Doctrine from this Verse, *scil.* That great pain and sorrow do always follow the pleasures of sin. I next proceed to the second, which is this;

That when mens hearts go a whoring from God to the world, and the lusts of it, they meet with a famine or emptiness therein.

Doct. 2.

That

That Scripture, *Psal. 73. 27.* is expresse for it, and it's full of terrour; *For lo, they that are far from thee shall perish: thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee.* Where God are not, there is a Famine: This far Countrey is this present evil World; and God and this World are at a great distance: *Know ye not, that the friendship of this world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.* And in another place, *If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him: for all that is in the world, the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life is not of the Father, but of the world.* When carnal men court the vanities of the world, they bid defiance to God; and God will be avenged on them, in making the things of the world, which they so court, to be vanity and vexation of spirit to them. When mens minds go a whoring from God after the world, and the things of the world, they meet with a mighty Famine.

Object.
Psal. 17. 14.

Psal. 73. 7.

Ans.
Job 20. 22.

Esh. 5. 11.

But the men of this world have their Portion in this world, and *God fills them with his hid treasure;* it may may be with silver, and gold, and other precious things digged out of the earth: *And they have more than heart could wish;* more than they once imagined they should ever have had.

Suppose this, and yet there may be a famine in the heart and mind; *In the fulness of his sufficiency he shall be in straits.* So it was with *Haman, Esth. 5.* when he had told his wife and friends of the glory of his riches, and the multitude of his children, and all the things wherein the King had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the Princes--- yet says he, *All this availeth me nothing.* — So when

when *Eſau* ſaid to *Jacob*, *I have enough Brother*, Gen. 33. 9. it was but a ſlouriſh; his heart ſaid little enough.

2. God diſables the Creature from ſatisfying any man, when he ſets it in his heart inſtead of God. *Jonas* was exceeding glad of his gourd, *i. e.* over-much; and preſently a worm is ſent to wither it. When men forſake the fountain of living waters, Jer. 2. 13. they hew them out broken Ciſterns that can hold no water. There is a lie in them: They are like ſalt Prov. 23. 3. meats, that increaſe a man's thirſt. The more of the world, the more craving is the worldly heart: It is hydropical, ſtill thirſting after ſomething he hath not, or ſomething more of what he hath.

Solomon is a famous inſtance in the caſe, and may be *inſtar omnium*, one for all. It is ſaid of him, that when he was old, his wives turned away his heart 1 Kings 11. 4. after other gods: And now he left God, as this Son did his Father's houſe, he went into a far Countrey; and ſetting his heart on the luſts of the world, he met with a mighty famine amongſt all things under the Sun, or over all the face of the earth: He was King in *Jeruſalem*, and he gave his heart to ſeek Gen. 41. 5, 6. and ſearch out by wiſdom (*i. e.* carnal or earthly wiſdom) concerning all things that are done under the heavens; *i. e.* to find out happineſs; but he found this to be ſore travel: He tried all Creatures Eccleſ. 1. 12. for ſatisfaction, but found it not; every Creature ſaid, It is not in me. In all his fulneſs his heart was Job 28. 14. empty; he met a mighty famine over all the world. None in all the world like him for parts and knowledge; he was the wonder of the world for theſe: They came from all parts of the earth, even from 1 Kings 4. 34. all Kings of the earth, to hear of his wiſdom. *Ariſtotle*, who by many is called *Natures Secretary*, was but a Novice to *Solomon*. Z And

And beside his high and extraordinary parts, his riches were so vast, as that *silver was plentiful as stones in Jerusalem*. And he had sumptuous buildings, *Eccles. 2.* and he kept a sumptuous Court, *1 Kings 4.* His Dominions were large and extensive; and his Kingdom exceeding great: And he gave his heart to mirth and pleasure; and whatsoever his eyes desired, he kept not from them; *I withheld not my heart from any joy, v. 10.* And yet this was the *summa totalis*, the sum of all, *v. 11. Behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit.*

Eccles. 2. 1.

Eccles. 1. 2.

Wherever *Solomon* looked for satisfaction and happiness out of God, he was failed in his expectation. As when *Eve* brought forth *Cain*, she thought she had born the promised Seed, *Gen. 3.* but she found herself utterly mistaken; and therefore names her next Son *Abel*, *i.e.* vanity. But *Solomon* doubles it, after his enquiry for content in all things under the Sun; *Vanity of vanities*, saith the Preacher, *Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.*

Deut. 28. 65.

And herein God was merciful to *Solomon*, in that he would let him find no rest to his Soul out of God; as God said to *Israel* when their hearts went a whooring from him; *Thou shalt find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot find rest amongst those Nations where the Lord shall scatter thee.*

If a wounded man find a weed in the field that will give him ease, he'll not go to the Chirurgeon: And so if a natural man's heart can find satisfaction in any thing of this world, he will not go to God. Whilst the Prodigal could make any shift, he had no thoughts on his Fathers house.

I. Now

1. Now the Lord disables the whole Creation from giving satisfaction to men, sometimes by removing them from their place. As he made the Sun go back ten degrees by the shadow on *Abaz* his Dial: So does he by mens Creature enjoyments on which their hearts are set; *Lovers and friends hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness.* God often cuts down the Tree, under whose shade a man reckons upon it to find refreshing. This was *Job's* case, *Job* 19. from the thirteenth Verse to the twentieth; *He hath put my brethren far from me; and mine acquaintance are verily estranged from me. — My breath is strange to my wife. —* And it was *David's* case at *Ziklag*; his followers, who had stood by him in that distreis, *talked of stoning him.* Isa. 38.8.
Psal. 18.
Lam. 4.20.
1 Sam. 30.6.

2. Sometimes, though the Lord lets a man's Creature comforts remain with him, yet he locks up their vertue; so that though he have their presence, yet he hath not their influence; as he shut the heavens in *Elias* his time, that it rained not for the space of three years and six months. As the Lord doth sometimes shut up the nocent and destructive power of the Creature from his servants; as he did that of the fire from the three young men, and of the Lions from *Daniel*, and of the Viper from *Paul*. James 5.17.
Dan. 3.
Dan 6.
Acts 28. So he often shuts up the cheering and gladding power of the Creatures from men that have them in abundance. *Manna* may seem but light and loathsome meat to *Israel*.

3. God doth often disable the faculties in men for taking any comfort in whatsoever they possess. Man's faculties are frequently vitiated, like the mouth and palate in a Fever, that cannot relish the

Gen. 21. 19.

best drink. The light of the Sun hurts a weak eye. *Hagar* saw not the Well of water when her Son was ready to die for thirst, till *God* opened her eyes. And the Preacher speaks his own experience.

Eccles. 6. 1, 2.

in this case; *There is an evil which I have seen under the Sun, and it is common among men: A man to whom God hath given riches and honour, so that he wanteth nothing for his soul of all he desireth, yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof.* What's the most pleasant Instrument, where there is not Art to use it? No man hath the Key of the Creatures influence, that opens and shuts at pleasure, but *God* himself.

Application.

Ecc. 44. 20.

1. This Doctrine serves for Caution to all: Take heed you leave not your Father's house, to go into this far Countrey: if you do, you are sure to meet with a mighty famine; you'll find you feed on Ashes. *God* will let a man find no content in any thing, that finds it not in him, or seeks it not there. *God* hath made the whole Creation too narrow for the soul of man, much more for the hearts of Saints. If your heart settle and fix on any Creature, you will find it will pinch you, as a narrow shoe doth the foot.

Gen. 2. 7.

The soul of man is from *God*; *God* breathed into man the breath of life, and he became a living soul.

Eccles. 12. 7.

Hos. 3. 3.

And so the soul that came from *God*, is for *God*, and not for another. *God* is for the soul, and the soul for *God*.

Lam. 3. 24.

Prov. 23. 26.

The Lord is my portion, saith my soul. And saith the Lord, *My son, give me thy heart.* Man

was

was made in the image of God, that nothing but God should satisfie man. God was satisfied with himself, when there was nothing else besides himself; and man should be satisfied with God alone; *I am God Alſufficient.*

It's ſaid God reſted not till he had made man; nor ſhould man reſt till he enjoy God; nay, man cannot. A man may ſay, as he did *Luke 12.* *Soul, take thine eaſe, thou haſt much goods laid up for many years:* I, but God will call him *fool* for it.

When *David* had a Kingdom, or a promiſe of it, this would not ſatisfie him without God. *As the hart* Pſal. 42. 1. *panteth after the water brooks, ſo panteth my ſoul after thee, O God.* It is God alone that can give a man his hearts deſire: *Delight thy ſelf in the* Pſal. 37. 4. *Lord, and he ſhall give thee thy hearts deſire. O* Pſal. 81. 10. *Israel, open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it. Be-* Iſa. 65. 13. *hold, my ſervants ſhall eat; but ye ſhall be hungry.* This is the difference betwixt thoſe that enjoy God, and other men.

Nature in man muſt have bread, but grace in man muſt have God. Give a gracious ſoul all the world, and take away God, and you give him *ſtones for bread.* He ſays as *Micha*, *Judges 18. 24.* *Ye have taken away my gods, and what have I more? In thee are all my ſprings;* ſaith the holy *Psalmiſt.* Pſal. 87. ult. A godly man can no more live without God, as many do, *Eph. 2. 12.* than a fiſh can live out of the water.

Quest. But hath not godliness *the promise of the life that now is?* 1 Tim. 4. 8. And he tells the Saints, *that all things are theirs; even the world, and things present* —

Ans. I; but not to set their hearts on. These things must keep in the Suburbs of your heart, but not come into them. The heart is God's place, and Christ's place. Saints may use this world, but not abuse it; which they do, when they set their hearts on it. You may desire the things of this world, but not lust after them, as *Israel* did after flesh. Your lustings after them will make you *lean or thin from day to day*, as *Amnon's* lusting after *Tamar* did; and make you surfeit of them when you have them, as the people did of their flesh.

While the humours of the body keep within their measure, the body hath an encrease or good temperament; but if they get into the excess, some sickness commonly follows: So is it with the soul; while affections keep their stint to these outward things, what you have you'll enjoy comfortably; *God adds no sorrow with them; but gives you power to eat--and to see good in your labour and portion here.* And as you'll have comfort in what you have; so what you have not, you will feel no need of it.

But if affections run out, and exceed their bounds, instead of satisfaction, and enough, you'll find a famine and dearth in your selves. And therefore when your hearts are settling here, say to them, *Arise, this is not your rest.* When men seek for rest in a Countrey far from God, they will be like the unclean spirit, *which walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none.*

Quest.

1 Cor. 3. 21--

Prov. 23. 26.

Eph. 3. 16.

1 Cor. 7. 31.

2 Sam. 13. 4.

Num. 6. 11.

Prov. 10. 22.

Eccles. 2. 24.

Mich. 2. 10.

Matth. 12. 43.

Quest. But are godly persons in danger of this, to let their minds go astray to these outward things?

Ans.w. Yes; they may enter into this temptation. Christ's Disciples hanker'd after great things in this world; their thoughts were busied about an earthly Kingdom, both before Christ's death, and after his resurrection. *James* and *Mark 10.33,* *John* made their requests for the greatest places ³⁵ there, even when he had been telling them of his sufferings at hand. And after his Resurrection, all his Disciples jointly asked the question, *Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the Kingdom to* *Acts 1.6.* *Israel.*

The world may steal away a godly man's heart from God; as *Abolom* did the peoples from *David.* ^{2 Sam. 15.} When *Dinah* went to see the daughters of the Land, she was defiled by *Shechem*: and so ^{Gen. 34.} if Christians do not over-see their hearts, they will be *gadding to change their way*, like the ^{Jer. 2.36.} Jews; and now it's ten to one the world defiles and deflowrs their hearts. Our blessed Saviour saw it needful to Caution his Disciples *to take heed lest their hearts be overcharged with the cares of this world.* ^{Luke 21. 34.} They had in them that *παρωσημία*, that common poyson of nature, which, when abetted by Satan's temptations, may draw our hearts, as well as theirs, to court the world and the lusts of it; *The lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life.* ^{1 John 2.16.}

Now

Gen. 9.

Gen. 19.

We know how righteous *Noah* was thus overtaken after the flood; and *Lot*, when out of *Sodom*. And it was after he had spoken of these days of *Noah*, that Christ gave that Caution to his Disciples. So much for this Doctrine from the fourteenth Verse, *viz. That when mens hearts go a whoring from God to the world, and the lusts of it, they meet with a famine or emptiness therein.*

CHAP.

C H A P. XIX.

Sheweth, That troubles of Conscience are God's preparative to a Sinner's Conversion: And the Reasons hereof. How God sometimes varies his Method: And to what end. What degree of sorrow requisite: With the Application of the whole; from the last Clause of the fourteenth Verse,

And he began to be in want.

I H A V E done with the two former Doctrines from the fourteenth Verse. I come to the third from the last Clause, *viz.*

*That God brings a sinner into Soul or Conscience Doct. 3.
straits in order to his Conversion.*

The Prodigal's Case tells us this; *There arose a mighty famine in that Land, that far Countrey, and he began to be in want.* This fell out before his

A a return

Mark 3,

2 Cor. 7.

return to his Father. The spiritual meaning and signification whereof is, That troubles of Conscience or Soul straits, are God's preparative to a sinner's returning to him. They are the sick that need the Physician. There is indeed sorrow and trouble for sin after Conversion, which is called *godly sorrow*; and this sorrow for sin is grace, for it is sorrow for sin, as sin is an unkindness to God: But this I am not speaking to now. There is a sorrow for sin before Conversion, and in order to it, which is not grace, but a preparation to it.

Indeed this sorrow for sin, and trouble of Conscience in the sinners apprehension of wrath, may be dangerous, and an hinderance to grace, if not rightly ballas'd; It may bring to despair, as it did *Cain*, and *Saul*, and *Judas*: But rightly improved, it is a happy preparative to a natural man's return to God, as we see in this Prodigal. I say it is a happy preparative: because, though this trouble of Conscience begin in self-love, which God doth allow a sinner; yet he knoweth it will end in love to Jesus Christ; as that womans, called *εμαρτυρη*, a noted sinner, when she knew that *much was forgiven her*, *she loved much*.

Luke 7;

This conviction of sin and pain of Conscience, through feeling or fear of Divine wrath, driveth a sinner to cast about for ease, and a better state than now he is in.

Quest. But how is a man prepared for Conversion by his sense of sin and misery?

Ans. 1. This removes the barrs to a man's Conversion; *scil.* his ignorance, wilfulness, security, pride, self-flattery and presumption: These vanish away, when the true sense of sin and misery come in to

to the Soul. When the Earthquake had set open the Prison doors, and put the Goaler into a trembling in his body and soul, he then cries out to those men he had used so severely, *Sirs, what must I do to be saved?* Acts 16.

But yet if Christ carry not on this work farther by giving in converting grace, it will be but a false Conception, or a miscarrying Womb. For the Law in its humbling and terrifying work gives not grace, but helps in fitting the heart to receive it. These sorrows of Conscience by the work of the Law level the hills and strong holds of pride and presumption that hinder grace. *John* must prepare the way of the Lord.

There are two things required in a sinners Conversion; the removal of impediments, and the influence of grace into the heart. The one is the work of the Law, *i. e.* conviction of sin and labourings in the Conscience; and the other is Christ and his Gospel. If a room have light, there must be openings of the shuts, and shining of light of the Sun. If the shuts be not withdrawn, the Sun cannot shine into the room, nor the light come in; and if the Sun be not up, there can come no light, though the shuts be open. So impediments to Conversion must be removed by conviction of sin, and then God shines into the heart with *the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.* 2 Cor. 4.6.

2. Sense of sin, and straits of Conscience for it, make the sinner feel a need of Christ, as the Disciples did when the winds and storms were ready to sink the Ship or Vessel; *Lord save us, we perish.* Matth. 8.24. Thus when storms arise in the Conscience of a sinner, now if the work be not hindered, it comes to

Acts 2.37.

Acts 16.30.

this, *Men and brethren what shall we do?* and *Sirs, what must I do to be saved?* And now Christ is likely to be received on his own terms, *i. e.* with his Yoke and Cross: For no sorrows or sufferings for Christ are so bitter, as sorrow and sufferings in Conscience for sin before a man come unto Christ.

Quest. But doth God need this preparation-work in the conversion of sinners? Can he not give grace without thus shattering the Consciences of poor sinners?

Matth. 3.9.

Matth. 3.2.

Mark 10.

Ans. The Question is not so properly what God can do, as what he will do in the case. This hath been God's path that he hath usually trodden in the work of Conversion, in the Conversion of *adulti*, such as have the use of Reason. Christ Jesus gave not grace to stocks or stones (though God is able to raise up Children to *Abraham* of stones;) but Jesus gave grace to men and women prepared to it by the ministry of *John* the Baptist, who preached first Repentance for sin, and then Faith in Christ. He can, and doubtless doth give grace to Children, as to those he took up in his arms and blessed: But he gives grace in another way to such; the same grace, but in a different way.

2. Chro. 33. 12.

And this also must be yielded, That every sinners Conscience is not wounded alike in order to Conversion. The Smith makes not every Nail with his great Hammer; nor doth God smite every man's Conscience with the like terrour of the Law, that he brings to grace. *Manasseh* was greatly humbled; and who knoweth how greatly? But if the Lord deal more favourably with some others, why should any man complain that his bones are set with a little pain? The Physician knoweth best how to use his Patient.

Patient. God has pity on many a poor soul under the sense of sin, and drops of his wrath, lest *Satan* should get an advantage; which was the reason why *St. Paul* willed the *Corinthians* to carry it gently ^{2 Cor. 2. 8, 11} towards the repenting and grieving incestuous person.

O then bless God, if in thy Conversion he hath abated thee any thing of those terrible and most severe shakings of Conscience, that some other sinners have had in theirs.

It's true, that there are amazing Convulsions of Conscience in some men, who never reach Conversion, or saving Humiliation for sin; as in *Cain* and in *Ahab* : *Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself?* So in ^{Gen. 4. 13.} *Judas*, ^{1 Kings 21.} *Muttb. 27.*

And there is in some a silent forrowing for sin; which though it make no great noise in the Conscience, yet it kindly melts the heart, and makes a man lothe both his sins and himself, and fall into dear love with his Saviour. This was the Case of that woman in *Luke 7*. And for ought we read, most that the Lord Jesus himself called, he called in this way. He converted many Publicans and Sinners with a still voice : *The bruised reed he did not break, nor* ^{Mark 12. 20.} *quench the smoaking flax.* He opened many sinners hearts without any terrifying alarms of Conscience, as he did *Lydia's*. ^{Acts 16. 14.}

God can humble a sinner as well by the sense of mercy and free grace, as by the sense of his wrath. This is certain, that the Lord doth change his way in the Conversion of sinners : He hath, as *St. Jude* ^{Jude 22, 23.} *saith, compassion on some, putting a difference; and others he pulls out of the fire.* A yielding block needs not so great and hard a wedge, as a hard knotty piece of wood doth.

And

And God lets some endure the greater pangs and throws in their Conversion, that they may be the better Midwives to those that may need them in the like condition. God useth the same matter and method in every sinner's Conversion; first conviction of sin, and then conviction of righteousness—— yet he uses not the same degrees: Some men have the sight of sin and of Christ almost together.

Quest. But what is the measure or required degree of humiliation or trouble of Conscience for sin in order to conversion?

Ans. When there hath been so much as brings the sinner out of himself, and off from all other Sanctuaries to Jesus Christ; and so to Christ, as that his mind would know him as the Gospel holds him forth to sinners; and the will would choose him, and the affections incline to embrace him, and upon his own terms; then there hath been sufficient trouble of Conscience for sin in order to a sinner's Conversion. This was *Mary Magdalens* Case in *Luke 7.* for she is probably thought to be that woman, a noted sinner.

The end of the terrour of the Law is to bring men to Christ; *Gal. 3. 24.* Indeed if trouble of Conscience drive sinners to Christ, only to prevent and save from damnation, this is not enough: For a thoroughly humbled sinner would have Christ, to escape the dominion, as well as the damnation of sin. He doth not divide Christ, but takes him in the whole; with his Scepter to rule in and over him and his sins, as well as with his Censer to offer Sacrifice for them. Sufficient sorrow for sin takes a man not only off of his shifts, but off of his lusts also.

Mark 11. 28.

He is weary of sin as well as sorrow. Christ sanctifying

ying is welcome to him, as well as Christ saving; and Christ purging, as well as Christ pardoning. A sinner is not sufficiently terrified with sin and wrath, till he come to say to Jesus Christ, as *Saul* did at his Conversion, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* Acts 9. 6.]

Application.

1. Let every man see to it, that his sorrow for sin have been sufficient; that it hath shew'd him his lost condition; turned him from all refuges but Jesus Christ; made him willing to give as well as to take; willing that he be Christs, as Christ his Sorrow for sin that hath not these effects, is not sufficient.

Many sinners look on sin through false Glasses: as 1. They measure sin by their own phantasies, and so look upon it as a dead Serpent without a sting, or as a painted Lion, and so without fear of danger. Few men see sin with God's curse as it's sting; *The strength of sin is the Law.* How? As it curses the sinner; as it is Mount *Ebal* to the sinner. 1 Cor. 15. 56.

2. Men commonly judge of sin by God's patience towards sinners, and not by God's word. Because God lets sinners alone at present, and holds his peace; and because sentence is not speedily executed against an evil work; therefore the heart of man is fully set in them to do evil. Psal. 50. 21.
Eccles. 8. 11.

But

But what saith God, to undeceive such men, in the quoted Psalm? *These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; and thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thy self: but I will reprove thee, and set thy sins in order before thee.*

Rom. 2. 4, 5.

God's patience should greaten sin in our eyes, and not lessen it; because sin multiplies under patience. Though God have long patience, yet there will be a day of reckoning betwixt him and the sinner: *His transgression is sealed up in a bag; and God sews up his iniquity;* as Job's expressions are. Yea, God himself saith as much Deut. 32. 34. *Is not this laid up in store with me, and sealed up among my treasure?* O then let men judge of sin, not by God's patience, but by his Law. Look on every sin as a debt in God's Book, that must be answered for. Christ would have us so to estimate sin, so that all our sins must be answered for, as having brought us into debt to Gods Law and Justice; and we, or Christ for us, must pay the debt: We cannot; and Christ will not pay any sinners debt, that knows not his debt and his own inability to satisfy it. Christ shed not his blood for presuming sinners. There was no Sacrifice allowed in the Law for sins of presumption.

Job 14. 17.

Marth. 6. 12.

Numb. 15. 30.

Gen. 4. 7.

Therefore it's the safest way for sinners to be *Nathans* to themselves, to discover their own sins to their souls, to load their prayers with confessions of them, and to give full audience to the Lectures of Conscience that will speak home to the sinner first or last. Sin lies at the door, ready to go into the Conscience when God saith *Go*.

The Hebrews put sin for its punishment, as Gen. 19. 15. *Take thy wife and thy daughters*, saith the Angel to Lot, *lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the City, i.e. the punishment of it.* Every man's sin will find him out, if he find not out it. *Be sure your sins shall find you out, Numb. 32. 23. i.e. to confess it, and be humbled for it.*

Jesus Christ escaped not the punishment of sin, when he undertook for their sins who came to him; and therefore let not any sinner think to escape the punishment of sin in his Conscience, who cometh not to Christ.

O spare not thine own soul in sorrow for sin, so far as thou findest it thy way to Christ. If remorse of Conscience for sin be not come, it will come: And the sinner may look upon himself within Gunshot, that is at ease, and in peace at present.

Think not that God hath forgotten those sins that thou thy self hast. Thou sinnedst so and so, and *thoughtest I was like thy self; but I will set thy sins in order before thee.* A man may be questioned by men for a murder done long since; how much more will a sinner be questioned for his sins, he sinned in *Adam*, so many thousand years ago; and especially for those of his whole life, if he have not sued out his pardon by Christ? *Remember, and forget not, Deut. 9. 7. how thou provokedst God in the wilderness, from the day that thou didst depart from Egypt.* This was forty years since, yet *Israel* must remember this, and be humbled for it, or else there is no pardon for it. Men that live in sin, with easie thoughts of pardon, it's just with God to give them up to despair of pardon, when their Conscience comes to sense of their sins.

Hof. 2. 15.

But yet take heed, when sense of sin and wrath does come, of settling your selves in the *valley of Achor* ; but see it to be a *door of hope*. God dislikes despair in sinners, as much as presumption. God would have sinners magnifie his mercy, as well as his justice : He is Almighty to pardon, as well as to revenge. Your sins may be mighty, but not Almighty :

Numb. 14. 17.

But God is Almighty to pardon ; *Let the power of my Lord be great, saith Moses, to pardon this peoples sin.* And the humbled sinner hath this great

Isa. 55. 7.

power of God to pardon sin in promise ; *Let the wicked forsake his way, and he will abundantly pardon :* and may glory in it, as they did *Mich. 7. 18.* *Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgressions of the remnant of his heritage ; because he delighteth in mercy?* And so much for the third and last Doctrine from the fourteenth Verse.

CHAP. XX.

Representeth, How much it is in the nature of man, when convicted of sin, to have recourse to any thing, though never so vain, for ease, rather than unto God. Several Reasons or Causes from whence this comes to pass. The Application informing us, That Conviction is but a partial Conversion; and of what nature are all false Refuges. With divers Considerations moving us to beware of them; from the first Clause of the fifteenth Verse,

And he went and joyned himself to a Citizen of that Countrey.

HA V I N G Considered the sinners misery, let us next see the course he takes for his relief,

in the fifteenth Verse; *And he went and joyned himself to a Citizen of that Countrey, and he sent him into his fields to feed Swine.*

And here we have two things to be considered :

1. The project of this Prodigal for his relief in his great strait, *He went and joyned himself to a Citizen of that Countrey.* The Greek word signifieth to glue together; so that he did, as it were, put himself as an Apprentice to him; the same word as is used to express our union with Christ. *He that is joyned to the Lord, is one spirit.*

2. There is the imployment the Citizen set him to, *He sent him into his fields to feed Swine*: mean and base service.

As to the first, you'l say, Who is meant by this Citizen?

Stella in Luc.

James 3.15.

John 4.30.

2 Cor. 4.4.

John 8.44.

2 Tim. 2.26.

Rom. 8.7.

Numb. 74.4.

It may be the Devil, or carnal Reason, which is from the Devil. So St. James speaks of *wisdom that is sensual and devilish*. The Devil is called *the Prince of this world*, and *the God of this world*. He is the Chief of this far Countrey; and to his service carnal and wicked men devote themselves: *Ye are of your Father the Devil; and his lusts ye will do.* The Devil hath wicked men at his beck; *They are taken captive by him at his will.*

2. The carnal mind, which is *enmity against God, sensual wisdom*, which is of the Devil, James 3.15. This sent him not home to make his peace with his Father, but kept him in this far Countrey, though labouring under Famine. As *Israel* had rather return to *Egypt*, that had been to them a house of Bondage, than go forward to *Canaan*, the good Land of Promise.

2. As

2. As to his imployment this Citizen set him about, it was base, *He sent him into his fields to feed Swine*; which was intolerable to a Jew, to whom Lev. 11. 7. Swine were an abomination. It imports the drudgery that Satan puts natural men upon; they are his Vassals; he imployes them in very base work, to do 2 Tim. 2. 26. his lusts. As Turks do Christians who are their slaves, but with this difference; these are drudges against their will, those very willingly, *though they think not so*; as it's said in another case of the *A Assyrians*. Ila. 10. 7.

The scope and spiritual meaning of this part of the Parable is this; It sets forth 1. the sorry shifts that men under Conviction and pangs of Conscience, as to their sinful state, do commonly make to get any peace, and prevent their returning to God; any quiet from a brawling Conscience keeps them off from seeking peace with God. So that this is the first Doctrine,

That when natural men come under troublesome Convictions of sin, and sense of wrath, their way is to fly to any vain and sorry shifts for ease, and not to God. Doctr.

It's the use of such to make lies their refuge: It runs in the heart-veins of natural men: *We have made lies our refuge; and under falsehood have we hid our selves.* Ila. 28. 15. Like a man that is fallen into the water, he'll catch at any thing that is next to help him, though it do him no good.

Matth. 19.

Luke 18.

1 Sam. 6.

If a meer Moralift fall under thefe Convictions at any time, his fanctuary is, *All thefe have I kept from my youth*. If a Pharifee's Confcience check him, as it feldome does, his refuge is, *I thank God I am not as other men, or as this Publican*. If an ignorant Creature's confcience grumble, he betakes himfelf to his good meanings, as the *Philiftines* did, when they fent away the Ark that plagued them upon a new Cart. If the Confcience of a prophane man flie in his face, he flies to hereafter Repentance; or God is merciful; or Jesus Chrift died for finners in the lump. And thus natural men, when againft their will they are convinced of their woful condition, think thus to fkin over the fore for prefent.

Hof. 5. 13.

And this is the reason why we have many convinced finners, but few converted, becaufe their convictions fend them to falfe refuges, and not to God. This Prodigal, when he was in want, and met with a mighty famine in a far Countrey, he fpeaks not a word as yet of his returning home to his Father; but he hires himfelf to a Citizen of that far Countrey. So long as a finner can make any fhift to be quiet in his finful ftate, he thinks not of his return to God. As it's faid of *Ephraim*, *when he faw his ficknefs, he went to the Affyrian*, not to God, though he miffed there of healing for his wound.

2 Sam. 13. 4.

We have much experience how apt men are to ward off the blows of the Word from their Confciences: And if a blow do light there, and hurt, their plaifter is fome worldly diverfion; fome deceitful luft in their heart asks them, as *Jonadab* did *Amnon*, *Why art thou fo lean from day to day?* or they think to wear it out in time, as fome hardy men do by bodily diftempers.

It's

It's the practice of men in their sins to keep off their doom, as long as they can, by Apologies for themselves, having been taught it from the beginning; *The Serpent beguiled me, and I did eat. The woman which thou gavest me, gave me, and I did eat.* When John terrified the Pharisees and Sadducees with, *O generation of Vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?* They immediately flie to their imaginary City of Refuge; *We have Abraham to our Father.*

Matth. 3.

What a Catalogue of Pleas had Paul for himself before his Conversion? He had his birth, and his sect, and his unblamable life, and his zeal in his way: but when he had obtained mercy and grace to be a Convert, he was ashamed of all those plausible shifts he had made to keep and nussle himself in his natural, sinful estate; he cast them all off as dross and dung, when he came to know the necessity and excellency of Jesus Christ by experience; here he saw was a convicted sinners City of Refuge indeed.

Phil. 3. 4, 5, 6.

Phil. 3. 7, 8, 9.

Poor sinners have their bushes to stand under when a shour comes, till there come a storm indeed, that forceth them out to seek a safer place. When a sinner is ready to fall, then Satan puts a Reed in the shape of a Staff into his hand; he represents to him an imaginary mercy of God, such as cannot be found in the holy Scripture; such a mercy as would destroy God's Justice, and Truth, and Holiness; such mercy as encourageth in sin, *to sin that grace may abound.* And if he be beaten off from this mercy, then he catches at hereafter Repentance, or at some negative goodness: He thinks in himself, he is not guilty of such and such sins as many

Rom. 6. 1.

many are, and some of the godly in Scripture. I am the fuller in this case, because men are so full of shifts, when under convictions of sin, to hold them off from through Conversion to God.

Reasons of the Doctrine.

The Reasons why men, when under Convictions of Conscience have recourse to false Refuges, are

1. From their ignorance: when they feel their wound, they are ignorant of a certain remedy, and therefore make many experiments: They are as men affrighted out of their sleep, that know not on the sudden where they are, or what to do. Mens Ignorance of the Covenant of Works, and Grace, and of the state of nature and grace; or of the nature of sin and grace; this ignorance makes them so foully mistake in their Sanctuaries, when their sin finds them out, and the curse of the Law pursues their souls: *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.* A blind man could not hit the way to any of the Cities of Refuge among the Jews: So poor ignorant souls, when they fall under terrour of Conscience, through their blindness they cannot hit their way to Christ, the appointed remedy. Satan drives on a great design in blinding the minds of them that believe not, lest they should believe, and be healed: As the *Philistines* carried on their design to destroy *Sampson* by putting out his eyes.

Hof. 4. 6.

2 Cor. 4. 4.

2. A second Reason is mens unwillingness to venture on Christ upon Scripture terms: Sinners would have Christ, but on their own terms; his are too high for them; to forsake all, even their sweetest lusts, take up his Cross and follow him, not knowing whether they go, as *Abraham* did his own Kindred and Countrey; therefore they take up with cheaper stuff. Others, besides that rich man, think Christ's terms too hard. Jesus Christ is a City of Refuge to none that would have him and thir lusts too: Indeed they may bring their sins to him, when they come themselves, but as their sores, of which they would be healed. But it's as hard for a natural man to leave his lusts, to follow Christ, as it was for that rich man to leave his great estate.

Matth. 10. 37,

38

Luke 14. 26.

Gen. 12. 11.

Heb. 8.

Matth. 19. 21.

But doth not God offer Christ, and Christ himself freely, and without terms? ——— *buy wine and milk without money, and without price.* Yes; but this invitation is to such as thirst; *Ho everyone that thirsteth come* ——— And this thirst of the sinner comes through the Consciences labouring under the burden of sin, and sense of Divine wrath: *Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

Isa. 55. 1.

Matth. 11. 28!

And yet Christ's terms, he propounds to a sinner, hinder not the terms of the gift. It is but as if a man should bid you cast the stones out of your hand, that you may take an handful of silver or gold; for so the sinner is bid to cast his lusts out of his heart, that there may be room for Christ; *Cast away from you all your transgressions* ——— Now rather than a natural man will do this, he will close with any sorry shift to get his Conscience quiet.

Ezek. 18. 31!

3. A third Reason is, because it is ease, and not grace, or Christ himself, that the sinner troubled in Conscience first desires and seeks. The troubled sinner does not naturally look out after grace, but ease; the soul is as eager of ease as the body. When the body is in great pain, a Countrey man will take any slip-sawce, as they say, for some ease, rather than he will go to the Physician; this is costly; he is for any thing that will stupifie the part grieved, and minds not to take away the cause of the grief.

Thus doth the soul of a natural man, when he is in pain; there any thing that will give him present ease is welcome: He'll stop *Cerberus* his mouth with a Crust. *David* must play away *Saul* his Evil Spirit with his Harp. Yea, there is many a man, when in Soul-trouble for sin, and sense or fear of wrath, will fall to prayer and reading, and resolving, &c. to get some quiet within; but so soon as it is got, his Devotion is laid aside, as a man plucks off the plaister when he thinks the sore is well.

When the Lord slew *Israel*, then they fought him, *Psalm 78. 34, 36*, and enquired early after God; yet they did but flat-
 41. ter him; they turned back. A man in a storm will into his Neighbours house, not to dwell there, but for shelter, till the storm be over. So is it with natural men, when Conscience is affrighted, they are for good prayers, and good books, and good company; but when the pain is past, they are as they were afore.

Application.

1. This informs us, that a sinner, who is convinced of his sinful and miserable estate, is but half converted: Indeed this is but the least part of his conversion; to drive him out of his secret places, to keep him off from false refuges and self-shiftings, and to get him to Christ upon Christ's terms, and to stick there, is the better part of the work. To convince of sin is the Spirit's first work; but to convince of righteousness is the harder: What to keep him from false Sanctuaries on the one hand, and from despairing reasonings on the other, this is the more difficult business. Either a man is fullen, and will not hearken to a remedy for the wound, as *Cain* was; *Why is thy countenance fallen?* saith God to him: *If thou doest well shalt thou not be accepted?* or else he betakes himself to the next hedge he meets with for shelter, and there he thinks himself as safe as the *Jebusites* in their strong hold, when they sent this message to *David*; *Except ye take away the blind and the lame, ye shall not come in hither.* The strong man in the sinner, that is Satan, will not be disarmed, till a stronger than himself do the work, that is, the Lord Jesus Christ. *Paul's* confidence in his stock, and sect, and legal righteousness, were a great prejudice to his conversion, so that he was converted in a miracle.

2. This may put us upon examination of our selves in the case; and

1. Observe your aptness or averfness to apologize for fin, or for your selves in fin. Men hard to be convinced of fin; will easily take up with false Refuges when they are convinced: Most natural men withstand conviction as long as they can; *Are we also blind?* And when they are convinced, and come under the lash of Conscience, they will shirk any where for present ease: as *Cain*, when he was driven out of the presence of the Lord, full of terrour in his Conscience for his sin, he strove to make diversions, in seeking a pleasant situation, and building a City for his safety, thinking (it may be) to drown the howlings of his Conscience; as the *Italians* of old were wont to do by Thunder, in ringing their great Bells, and shooting off their great Canon.

2. Observe whether the Sanctuary you haste to upon conviction of sin, be a Scripture Refuge, or some forged apprehension of your own phantasie. It is the Word rightly understood, and so applied, that is an easing plaister for a disturbed Conscience at sin. What saith the Scripture? It is the word of Christ that cures the sores of Conscience: *Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee.* It's the office of the Word to wound, and search the sinners Conscience, *Heb. 4. 12.* How did the Word make *Felix tremble?* God smites the Earth with the rod of his mouth; *I have hewed them by the Prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth.*

And it is also the office of the Word to heal a wounded Spirit; *The Lord hath given me the tongue of the learned, to speak a word in season to him that is weary.* And, *The Lord hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the Captives.* O when convinced and grieved sinners put their

John 9.

Gen 4.

Rom. 4. 3.

Matth. 9. 2.

Acts 24. 25.

Isa. 11. 4.

Hos. 6. 5.

Isa. 50. 4.

Luke 4. 18.

their own wits to it for ease, it's a poor Medicine! *Medicina est morbo imbecillior*; the Potion is too weak for the Disease. A sinner must follow the Word for his guide in all Soul-straits, as the *Israelites* did the Cloud in the Wilderness; and look up to Jesus Christ for healing their stung Consciences, as they did to the brazen Serpent for their stung Bodies, John 3. 14, 15.

3. If the Sanctuary that a troubled Conscience takes to, leave or keep him in his sinful state, and loath to come out of it, as *Lot's* wife out of *Sodom*, this man makes lies his Refuge; he believes a lie; 2 Thess. 2. 11. a judgment on the followers of the man of sin. The true Sanctuary of a grieved sinner is the free and rich grace of God in the Gospel, which is a great enemy to sin, *Tit. 2. 11.* yea, though a man be willing to part with some particular sins, if he be not willing to part with his sinful state, he leans but on a broken Reed if he charm his troubled mind with this.

4. If a sinners Refuge in trouble of Conscience be injurious to the Attributes of God, his Mercy, his Justice, his Holiness, &c. this man deceives himself. How many, how many Conscience-galled sinners lick themselves whole with an imaginary mercy and grace in God? such a mercy as God hath not declared in his Word?

David supposeth in that prayer of his, *Psal. 49. 5.* that there are sinners to whom God will not be merciful. There was no Sacrifice in the Law for *presumptuous sinners*. As the Jews phansie to themselves a strange Messias, which the Scripture knows not: so do many sinners, yea convinced sinners, phansie to themselves a strange mercy in God; such

a mercy as is injurious to his justice and holiness; such mercy as separates between the pardoning and purging of the sinner; whereas it's plain in the Word of Truth, that sin is nauseous, when the sinner obtaineth mercy and grace: grace and sin are greater contraries than fire and water; because the Divine Nature is infinitely opposite to natural corruption. It is infinitely so in God, and everlastingly so in his Saints.

3. This Doctrine is useful to exhortation to all that have, or may have trouble of Conscience for sin. Take heed of false Sanctuaries, they will fail you at last, as *Achitophel* did *David*, who seemed to be his bosome friend.

It's not enough for you to know your lost condition, but you must seek the way to be found, as this Prodigal at length did: You must know your Cure, as well as your Disease. And your only cure is Jesus Christ. The brazen Serpent in *Numb.* 21. was a famous Type of this. *John* 3. 14, 15. Let the sense of sin, and sorrow for it, send you to Christ; and you wrong him much, if you say or think he cannot, or will not help you.

He that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out. You'll find all other things Physicians of no value: and as *Job* said of his friends, *miserable comforters.* O then come to Christ, and stick not in the way, but come home to him, and he'll ease your Conscience of it's burden; come to Christ on his own terms, and you are made for ever.

Take heed of carnal reasonings, when you would have ease in your Consciences. As *John* said to the Pharisees, *Think not to say in your selves we have Abraham to our Father:* So think not to say within your

Psalm.

John 6.37.

Job.

Matth. 11. 28.

Matth. 3.

your selves, God is merciful, and Christ died for sinners, meerly to quiet Conscience, that you may sin with ease. This is the way of the wisdom of the flesh to befool you. The wisdom of the flesh bids you apply your own Plaisters, and take your own Receipts, and not go to the Chirurgion or Physician, and so many convinced sinners perish in their carnal reasonings about the way of peace; *The way of peace they have not known.* Rom. 3. 17.

Alas, what can imaginary shelters advantage you in real dangers? Will the shadow of a House keep you from wett in a storm? This is the case of many troubled sinners. Be jealous of Sanctuaries. Better to endure your pain, than to accept of false ease: Though there be danger in despair, yet there is more in presuming. That it may be hath killed its thousands, but the other its ten thousands; as the woman said of *Saul and David.* 1 Sam. 3.

To take you off from carnal reasonings in this case; Consider

1. That carnal reason is blind in the ways of God with lost sinners. This is seen in natural men of the greatest parts and attainments, as in *Nicodemus* a Doctor in *Israel*; yet how simply did he reason and discourse Jesus Christ in the point of Regeneration? 1 Cor. 2. 14. John 3.

2. The wisdom of the flesh is deceitful as well as blind: It hath of the Serpent in it, which beguiled *Eve through his subtilty.* The wisdom of the flesh presents spiritual and eternal things to a man as they are not indeed: It puts a fair gloss of pleasure and profit on sin; but represents the ways of God unlovely, as it did by Christ; *There is no comeliness in him, why we should desire him.* It makes the way 2 Cor. 11. 3. Isa. 53.

to

to Heaven wider than the Scripture doth ; and the way to Hell narrower ; else how could any man say in his heart , *I shall have peace , though I walk in the imaginations of my own heart ?*

Deut. 29. 19.

3. Carnal reason , or the wisdom of the flesh is enmity against God , and against his holy will : It maintains argument stiffly against many duties God requireth ; and it vitiates the mind and judgment about spiritual things , as a foul stomach doth the palate.

Rom. 8. 7.

4. All carnal reasonings do but skin over the sores of Conscience , they will break out again : They may muzzle Conscience for a while ; but it will awake , though at present it may be in a dead sleep , and like *Sampson* , will break all Cords and Wyths , and lay about it at the sinner , as *Sampson* did at the *Philistines* . O consider how the holy Scriptures speak enough , and enough again , against mens deluding confidences : *The Lord hath rejected thy confidences , and thou shalt not prosper in them . The hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies . And , Behold , all ye that kindle a fire , that compass your selves about with the sparks , walk in the light of your fire , and in the sparks that ye have kindled : This shall ye have at mine hand , ye shall lie down in sorrow .*

Jer. 2. ult.

Isa. 28. 17.

Isa. 50. 11.

All carnal reasonings about your estate towards God are but foundations of Sand , that a shower or storm will wash away ; and like that building with untempered mortar , which the Hail-stones did rend . God will at length so shake and shatter the Consciences of such sinners , that all their leaning-stocks for ease shall fall , and they with them .

Ezek. 13. 10,
11.

5. While

5. While a man is under the sense of sin and wrath, there is some hopes; there are some hopes of his conversion, for he is in God's way to it: But when he betakes himself to consult with flesh and blood, the case is more desperate. It's a harder thing to overcome Souldiers in a Garison, than in the open Field; so is it harder to convert a sinner to God, when he hath fortified himself with opinionative shifts and bull-warks, than when his conviction of sin lays him open to the fear of God's wrath. The Pharisee's own righteousness kept them from Jesus Christ; so do a sinners own carnal reasonings.

6. It is Satan's way, when he sees a sinner wearied with Conscience-conflicts, to allure him into his tents, as *Jael* did *Sisera*, and there Judges 4. soothes him with carnal reasonings for some ease and quiet, till the opportunity come, and then slays him.

Quest. But what kind of reasonings have men to get loose from disquieting Consciences?

Ans. Very many: I'll speak of some.

1. The heart reasons thus; There are thousands, yea millions, that walk and live as I do. But to this men should reply; *Follow not a multitude to do evil*: we know the whole world lieth in wickedness, Exod. 23. 2. 1 John 5. 19. & few there be Matth. 7. 14. who find the way to life.

2. Some times men may reason thus; Very many of the great and learned men of the world, the Christian world, tread the pathes that I do, and if they be not saved, who can? As they said, when Jesus said *a rich man shall hardly enter into the Kingdom of heaven, who then can be saved?* say his Disciples. This is like their reasoning in *John 7. 58. Have any of the Rulers of the Pharisees believed on him?* But to this reply that of the Apostle to the *Corinthians, Brethren, ye see your calling, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called.*

3. Some argue thus in themselves; This is an easie way I am in; my Conscience would let me have no quiet before, and I see there is nothing but trouble and melancholy in a stricter and preciser course; Why should I travel forty years through a wearisome Wildernes to *Canaan*, as some do? I, but to this reply; This carnal ease and pleasure is the Devil's Paradise: And what comfort is it to the Bee to be drowned in honey? Remember Father *Abraham's* words to that *Dives*, *Remember, that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things, but now thou art tormented.*

O for *Moses* his faith, who chose rather to suffer afflictions with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. And for *David's* mind, who *esteemed a day in Gods Courts better than a thousand elsewhere.*

In a word, when any of you come under rebukes and terrours of Conscience for sin, make use

use of the weapon that hath wounded, for healing, *i. e. the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God*; and then to Jesus Christ, he is the only *City of Refuge* for a sinner to fly to from the *Pursuer of blood*. So much for the first Doctrine from the first Clause of the fifteenth Verse.

C H A P. XXI.

Sets forth the Power that Satan bath over men whilst in their Natural Estate. Together with a threefold Use to be made hereof; from the same Clause of the fifteenth Verse,

And he went and joyned himself to a Citizen of that Countrey.

John 14. 30.
2 Cor. 4. 4.

WE Are to consider this Citizen, as meaning Satan, who is the Prince and God of this World, which is this far Countrey; and who seeks to make a prey of men when under Conscience-straits for sin. As St. *Paul* knew he did by the incestuous person, who was, by his order, delivered over unto Satan. So that the second Doctrine is,

1 Cor. 4. 5.

2 Cor. 2. 6, 11.

Doct. 2.

That Satan hath great power over men, whilst in their natural estate, both in their sinning, and in their trouble of Conscience for sin after Conviction.

Satan

Satan hath power over them, not only as he had with *Adam* in innocency to tempt him; and with the Son of God to tempt him, though he prevailed: not as he did with *Adam*; and with Saints to tempt them, as he did *David*, 2 Chron. 21. but he hath power to *take them captive at his will*; to make them his Vassals. Math. 4.
2 Tim. 2. ult.

Satan had power to *enter into Judas*, to influence him to the betraying of Jesus. Haply *Judas* might not intend the death of Christ, as the Jews did; but might conceive he would slip out of the midst of them, as he had often done, when they sought to lay hands on him. Satan might help him to this conceit, that Jesus would save himself, and he get money; which pleased his humour at present, but brought him at last into despair. Luke 22. 3.
Luke 4. 29, 30.
John 8. 59.

God delivers more over to Satan than the Church doth: He is *the Spirit that now worketh*, that worketh effectually *in the children of disobedience*. And therefore sinners in their conversion are said to be *turned from the power of Satan unto God*. Eph. 2. 2.
Acts 26. 18.

Quest. Whence hath Satan this power?

Ans. God lets it be so in his just judgment upon the fall of man. In the fall man forsook God, and cleav'd to the Devil: so that it was first their sin to put themselves into the power of Satan; and now it is God's judgment upon men. Those Scriptures may be read with trembling, as *Belshazzar* read the hand-writing on the wall, Psalm 78. 49. *The Lord cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, indignation, and trouble, by sending evil Angels among them.* And that Prophetical Prayer of *David* concerning *Judas*, *Let Satan stand at his right hand.* Dan. 5.
Psal. 109.

Quest.

Quest. How doth Satan exercise this power?

1. In tempting men to as much sin as he can, to such sins as himself cannot act. He tempts them to Atheism, though he himself cannot be one; the Devils believe that there is a God, and tremble. He tempts them to Drunkenness and Adultery, sins that he cannot properly act. He provoked our first Parents to eat, but he himself could not eat. Yea, Satan hath influence on them in their best actions and works, in their callings, in their holy performances: *He stood at Joshua's right hand to resist him, when he stood before the Lord for the people.* But he hath power on carnal mens hearts, when they come before the Lord. He matters not how much of Religion they do, so he can poison their manner and ends. He may carry men to Church in a design, as he did Jesus to a Pinacle of the Temple. The Devil had power over their souls, who had power to cast him out of other mens bodies. Satan can tempt no Creature but man to sin; and so he bestirs himself among them.

2. He puts them on to presume on the goodness of their present and final estate, however they live in this World. He teacheth them to say, *We shall have peace, though we walk in the imagination of our own hearts.* The unbelieving Jews could not be moved from their confidence, that they were *Abraham's Children*; though our blessed Saviour proved it to them, that they were *of their Father the Devil*. A lying Spirit deludes them, as he did *Zedekiah* that arch false Prophet, in making him confident that he had the Spirit of the Lord, and by that gave counsel to *Ahab*, 1 Kings 22.

3. In

3. In presenting to their minds lying Refuges, when they are under painful convictions of Conscience for sin : Satan *transformeth himself into an Angel of light* to the sinner : He can turn himself into any shape or appearance, as the Poets feign of *Proteus*. As Satan helps the man of sin to *do lying wonders*, *2 Thes. 2. 9.* so he helps many troubled sinners to lying Sanctuaries. It is likely he set *Cain* on building a City, to charm the evil Spirit that vexed him. 2 Cor. 11. 14. Proteus by the Paynims called the god of the Sea.

4. If this way fail, then he aggravates the sinners trouble of Conscience for sin; to get him into despair : not that he affects mens being troubled for their sins ; but when they are sorrowful this way, he would have them swallowed up of over-much sorrow. This is one of Satan his devices to get an advantage of the sinner, to bring about his damnation. 2 Cor. 2. 7, 11.

Satan makes many a soul pine away in their sins, as those Jews said of themselves, and perswades them to *curse God, and die*, as he would have done *Job*. And as he prompted his Friends to esteem him a Hypocrite: so he prompts many a Conscience-wounded-sinner to look upon himself as a Reprobate, as having out-sinned mercy, and he must be damned. Ezek. 33. 10. Job 2. 9.

Quest. But how cometh it to pass that natural men are no more sensible of this power of Satan over them?

Ans. Because he blinds their minds, as the *Philistines* put out *Sampson's* eyes, and did with him what they list: He deadens their sense of feeling. The holy Apostle *Paul* speaks of sinners that are *past feeling*. Satan is a Juggler, and an 2 Cor. 4. 4. Eph. 4. 19.

Im-

2 Cor. 11. 3. Impostor, or Deceiver, from the beginning.

Quest. Have natural men no power to resist the Devil?

Matth. 4.

James 4. 7.

1 John 2. 14.

1 John 5. 18.

Answer. They have lost it very much. *Adam* had power, if he had used it; and *Jesus Christ* had power, and did use it; and men in a state of grace have power to *resist the Devil*, and to *overcome the wicked One*, and to *keep themselves that the wicked One touch them not*, i. e. with a destructive touch; such a touch as he moved the Lord to touch *Job* with.

2 Chro. 21. 1.

Luke 22. 31.

Jo. ch. 1. & 2.

Zach. 3. 7.

Matth. 6. 13.

John 14. 13.

Luke 22. 32.

Rom. 16. 20.

Satan indeed hath power to tempt the Saints, and in part to get advantage of them. He *provoked David to number the people*, and he did it; and he *winnowed Peter*; and he assailed *Job* very hard; and he stood at *Joshua the High Priests hand, to resist him, when he stood before the Lord*. Our blessed Saviour hath taught us to pray daily, that *we be not led into temptation*. Yet Satan hath not that power over the Saints, as over other men; yea, as over man in the state of innocency, i. e. to seduce them from God, and from a state of grace. It's true, man in innocency in one respect had the advantage against Satan, which men in a state of grace have not now; in that he had no sin to joyn with Satan: In this point he might say, as our Lord *Jesus* did; *The Prince of this World cometh, and hath nothing in me*. Yet the Saints now have that power against and over Satan in other cases, that men in innocency had not; power to resist him, power to overcome him: Christ *prayeth for their faith*; and they have a promise that *Satan shall be bruised under their feet*.

1, but natural mens power to resist the Devil is but small; some they have, *i.e.* when he tempts to sins against the light of nature, and a natural Conscience, in these they may resist temptation. There are many sins that natural men sin, which they falsely charge upon Satan, they would sin if Satan were dead and buried; they are as willing to some sins as the Devil would have them; as the Pharisees and Jewish Rulers were to be rid of Jesus.

It's to be observed in Scripture, that the people of God charge not the Devil in the confession of sin, as *Eve* did with hers; *I have sinned, and I have done foolishly*, saith *David*. He pleads not that Satan provoked him, as *Eve* did, that the Serpent gave her, and she did eat. But many wicked men charge their sins upon the Devil, when they tempt him to tempt them, as *Saul* sought to the Devil. Rom. 2. 14, 15.
2 Sam. 24. 17.
1 Sam. 28.

Application.

1. Let no man be too fearless of the Devil; he hath great power in the world, especially over this men of this world; he is called *the god of this world*; he would be so, and the Lord lets him be so to some men, in some things. He is *the Prince of the power of the Air, that worketh in the children of disobedience*. Yea, he may have power over the people of God, to tempt them, if *they watch and pray not against temptation*, to which the Lord Jesus cautioned his Disciples. 2 Cor. 4. 4.
Eph. 2. 2.
Matth. 26. 41.

Matth. 16.

He put on *Peter* to dissuade Christ from his sufferings, for which he had this check; *Get thee behind me Satan*. He winnowed all the Disciples, and thereupon they all left him when apprehended. And *Paul* himself, after he had been in the third Heaven, was buffeted by a messenger of Satan. Yea, he was permitted to tempt our Lord Jesus to a most horrid sin; and to carry his body to a Pinacle of the Temple, and after into a high Mountain.

2 Cor. 12. 7.

Matth. 4. 4, 8.

Yea, and Satan may be in possession of souls, and not be known; the Devil often works in men *incognito*. Of all Creatures he would possess men; and though he acted by the Serpent's head, yet his aim was at *Eve*, and *Adam's* heart. He got leave to go into the Swine, yet his design was at their owners, to make them disgust Jesus the more; and so they did, *They besought him to depart out of their Coasts*.

Gen. 3. 1.

Matth. 8. ult.

The Devil knows that men only, of all Creatures in this world, are capable of sin and hell; and therefore he lays his contrivances against men, to bring as many as he can into his own Condemnation: And he had rather possess their souls than their bodies; he would have the best room in the house for himself, and that's the heart; He *entred into Judas his heart*, and *into Ananias his heart*: *Why hath Satan filled thy heart?* Yet Satan's spiritual possessions may be known, and how? why, when men will do the lusts of the Devil; *Ye delight to do his lusts*. The lusts of the flesh in carnal men, are so many unclean spirits: Not that the Devil does all these works of the flesh, but he tempts men to all. He did not dance about the golden Calf, but he made *Israel* to do so.

John 8. 44.

θίλεται πνεῦμα.

Gal. 5. 19.

Exod. 32.

Let

Let no man therefore be too fearless of Satan. *Paul* was jealous over the believing *Corinthians*, *Lest as the Serpent beguiled Eve, their minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.* 2 Cor. 11. 3.

2. Yet let not any sinner, under the power of conviction of sin, despair of Conversion, because of the power that Satan improves to hinder it. For consider, that the word of reconciliation which is preached to you, is the *power of God* to the salvation of the greatest of sinners. *St. Paul's Ministry* turned men *from the power of Satan unto God.* Rom. 1. 16. 1 Cor. 1. Acts 26. 18. Therefore let such wait on the Ministry of the Gospel, and do it in hope, as the infirm people did for the Angels troubling of the waters of that healing Pool, *John* 5.

And be advised also to be in the company of the godly; Satan hath not that power to vend his wares there, as among other Company. The Spirit of Divination knew this in that possessed Damocel he made use of to disturb *Paul* and his holy Company in their meeting to pray; their prayers, and *Paul's* authority from the Lord Jesus, cast him out. Acts 16. v. 18.

In thy trouble of Conscience for sin be not over-much alone. In this case I may use the words of the Preacher, *Eccles.* 4. 10. *Wo to him that is alone.* Solitariness in this season is Satan's house of temptation; he assaults where there is no help in resisting him, as he did by *Eve*. The evil Spirit used that man to solitariness *Luke* 8. 27. God is much for the society of his people; he appears with his power and glory in the Assemblies of the Saints. Frequent solitariness is useful indeed for men of grace; *Jesus Christ* went oft aside into a solitary place: but poor souls afflicted in their spirits for sin, should be

afraid of it, as Children are to be alone.

And be further advised to follow faithfully the affairs of your Calling : Idleness is the Devil's working time. While men slept, the Enemy came and sowed his tares. When *David* was lazing and gazing on his House-top, the Devil presented an Object to stir up his lust.

Eph. 4. 26, 27. Again, take heed of an angry passionate spirit ; this gives place to the Devil : And take heed of an envious spirit ; Satan is the envious one ; he filled *Cain* with envy at his brothers good works, because his own were evil : And beware of a discontented spirit ; this was one of the Devil's first sins, and the sin of our first parents : And above all, seek to Jesus Christ for deliverance from Satan's bondage. *If the Son make you free, ye are free indeed. He was appointed to preach deliverance to the captives. He loosed the daughter of Abraham, whom Satan had bound eighteen years ;* and it is observable how affectionately Jesus both spake and did in her case.

3. Here is comfort to God's people, that Satan's power is exceedingly broken as to them ; he hath no interest in them, and they have armour of proof, both defensive and offensive against him. You have the Spirit in you to guide and assist you ; and *he that is in you, is greater than he that is in the world* : And you have the Ministry of the holy Angels, who are stronger than Devils : And you have the continual prayers of the Lord Jesus Christ for you, that your faith fail not : And you have a promise, that *God will bruise Satan under your feet shortly ;* and that *the gates of hell shall not prevail against you.*

In a word, let all poor sinners, that have any sense of the sad estate of their souls, come from under the shadow

Eph. 6. 12. to the 18th.

John 14. 17.

1 John 4. 4. Heb. 1. ult.

Rom. 16. 20. Matth. 16.

shadow of this Bramble, the Devil, unto the shadow of Jesus Christ, the true Vine. The Devil writes all his Laws in Blood, as *Draco* did; O but Jesus Christ came meek into the World to save sinners; and he came into his Ministry with a beseeching Spirit to sinners; and left such a spirit in his Ministers, that were to treat sinners in his Name, when he was gone to the Father: *As though God did beseech you by us,* 2 Cor. 5. 20. *we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.* Jesus Christ is the sinners near Kinsman; he hath took part of flesh and blood, that he might have the right to redeem them. Poor Conscience-afflicted sinners may have gentle usage of Christ; *He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking* Mark 12. 20. *flax.* His Laws are not written in the sinners blood, but in his own. And thus much for the first Clause of the fifteenth Verse.

C H A P. XXII.

*Sheweth, what care natural men take
in making provision for the lusts of
the flesh: with the Application;
from the last Clause of the Fifteenth
Verse,*

And he sent him into his fields
to feed Swine.

NOW we come to the second thing in the
fifteenth Verse, *viz.* the Prodigal's employ-
ment; *He sent him into his field to feed
Swine*; a course and base employment. He sent him
not into the City to traffick and converse with men,
but to feed Swine, and at last to feed with them, as
in the next Verse.

This passage of the Parable may the better be un-
derstood by considering the Jews, to whom it was
spoken, in their great dis-affection to Swine: Swine
Lev. 11. 7, 10, were an abomination to them; It was one of their
11. unclean Beasts.

And here is the marrow of this Bone: This signi-
fies what a monstrous miserable man this younger
Son

Son became, by leaving his Fathers House to follow his own Lusts; he fell from the Son of a rich Father to be a Swineherd: And

The Scripture sets forth natural men by Swine for their uncleanness and filthy lusts wherein they wallow and bemire themselves, and prefer before Grace.

Matth.7.6.
2 Pet. 2.22.

The Devil possessed Swine; and those that are of the Devil, and in his power, feed Swine; they feed themselves with their own lusts. The *Psalmist* faith of natural men, *They are altogether become filthy.* And St. *Jude* calls some natural men *filthy dreamers*, v. 8. The Observation we may make from hence is this,

Matth.8.32.

Psal.14.3.

That carnal men make provision for the flesh, to Doctr. fulfill the lusts thereof.

This is implied in that of St. *Paul* to the *Romans*, c.13. v.14. *Make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof; i. e. as carnal and fleshly men do.*

The lusts of the flesh are the things that such men take most care for. *The lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life*, are by some Divines called, *The Worlds Trinity.*

1 John 2.16

Natural men are very drudges to their lusts; *Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way*, in pursuing thine own lusts. The soul of man, since the fall, is chiefly made up of desires, like a Spunge which is still sucking in. The most vigorous bent of the soul lies in this faculty of desire, which in the fall of man was, and still is in natural men, corrupted into lusts.

Isa. 57.10.

So that it is natural to men to walk after their own lusts, either of pleasure, or profit, or honour: These are the three sorts of lusts that are in the World, as St. *John* enumerates them. St. *Paul* makes himself an instance in the case, as well as others in the state of nature; *We our selves were sometimes foolish and disobedient, serving divers lusts and pleasures.* Lust is a natural man's Master; he serveth divers lusts. It's possible that a godly man may be an unwilling slave for a time to a lust, but he cannot be a willing servant to it; *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!* He may suffer a rape by his lust, but he cannot prostitute himself to them. It is the natural man that indulgeth his lusts; they are his sweetmeats, as *Solomon* saith of stollen waters, and the bread of deceit.

He is fond of his lusts, as *David* was of *Adonijah*, never chides them: It is the very tenor of a natural mans life to do his lusts: *Ye are of your Father the Devil, and his lusts ye will do.* They are not estranged from their lusts, nor can be; *Psal.* 78. 30. *Jer.* 13. 23. A natural man is drawn away of his own lusts, or enticed: His lusts have the command of the whole man, as the *primum mobile* has of the motion of all the other Spheres.

Sin laps and rolls up it self in sugar to natural mens lust, though it be filthiness in it self. The mire and dunghill are filthy and stinking things, and yet it's pleasure to Swine to wallow in it.

Application.

This shews us, That to serve sin and lusts is a base service; it is the Devil's drudgery he sets carnal men about: As such are slaves to Satan, who leads them at his pleasure so are they slaves to their own lusts, yet willingly so; so they love to have it. 2 Tim. 2. 26.
 As *Ephraim* walked willingly after the commandment of their idolatrous Princes, so carnal men walk willingly after the command of their own lusts, their corrupt and worldly desires: As they said to *Jeremiah*, *We will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart.* Jer. 5. 31. Hos. 5. 11. Jer. 18. 12.

O that men would consider it, that the service of sin is a base service, it makes men Swineherds. It may be pleasure to them, as mire is to Swine; but to sanctified souls it's base and fulsome: Carnal men are unclean Creatures. As in the Law there were clean and unclean Creatures, so are there such under the Gospel; regenerate and spiritual men are the one, and natural carnal men are the other. Spiritual men are so ashamed of the filthiness and uncleanness of their natural state they are got out of, that they loath themselves at the thoughts of it: But natural men *glory in their shame*, *Phil. 3. 19.* Ezek. 6. 9. c. 16. 63. c. 20. 43. c. 36. 31.

Gen. 1. 26.

God made man an honourable Creature, in his Image, and after his Likeness: but man hath made himself like a Beast; else it would be a strange thing, that men, who are Creatures capable of the highest enjoyments, even of glory, and of the God of glory himself, should take up with so low and base things, as any sinful sensual pleasures. And whereas God *put all things under his feet*, he now puts himself under foot, under the basest of things, the vilest lusts. This man does by nature and custom in sin.

Psal. 8. 6.

Phil. 3. 19.

Exod. 32.

Isa. 36.

Dan. 1. 1.

Some men make their bellies their gods; St. Paul speaks of such with tears. *Israel's golden Calf* was their god. Some men make themselves gods; as *Sennacherib*, *Antiochus Epiphanes*, and many more. As it was said to *Judah*, *Jer. 2. 28. According to the number of thy Cities, so are thy gods, O Judah*; so may it be said to a natural, carnal man, according to the number of thy lusts, so are thy gods.

Tit. 3. 3.

Eph. 3. 3.

And you who are now spiritual, you yourselves were as these in your natural state, as the Prodigal was before his conversion; you fed Swine, and fed with them while you were unconverted; *We our selves were sometimes foolish and disobedient, serving divers lusts. Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, as well as others.* There is no difference among men, till effectual Calling make it. Election leaves men equally vile and wretched, till Conversion come and distinguish. It's true, Election makes a difference

in

in God's purpose, but not in the quality of the persons, till grace doth it. There is no difference in the Clay whilst in the lump, but only in the Potter's intention, and hands afterward.

And so we are all alike in sin, and under wrath, till effectually called by God out of darkness into his marvellous light. 1 Pet. 2.9.

God suffers his Elect to be born in sin, and live in sinful lusts till the time of their Conversion, and then he makes them visibly to differ from other men: and therefore a judgment of the final state of natural men, even the greatest sinners, cannot be made by their present state; for though they are now in a natural condition, they may be elect vessels, and if so, shall be called to grace in their time. Indeed, such a mans state may be judged what it is at present; but his final estate is a secret.

And for such as are effectually called to grace, you should often look back to what you were by nature; *Such were some of you*, saith St. Paul to the converted *Corinthians, fornicators, idolaters, &c.* And to the believing *Romans, Ye were the servants of sin*; and to the *Ephesians, We were by nature the children of wrath as well as others.* 1 Cor. 6. 11. Rom. 6. 17. Eph. 2. 3.

And hereupon admire free grace in your change, *that when you were in your blood*, I say, when you were in your blood, *the Lord said unto you live. This my Son was dead, and is alive.* And now you have this priviledge, that you are out of that base service and drudgery to sin and lusts, which carnal men are in. And let this indear the love and free grace of God and Christ to

you, and of the Spirit in you, That you can say, and say truly and feelingly, as he did in the Ninth of *John*, *I was blind, but now I see*: I was an unclean Creature, but now am washed: I fed Swine, and did feed with them; but now at my Father's Table. Thus much for the fifteenth Verse.

CHAP.

C H A P. XXIII.

Wherein is shewed, That the things of this World, which natural men's hearts, for the satisfaction of their lusts, would feed upon, are, in the judgment of our Saviour Christ, no better than Husks and Swines-meat. In what respect they are so, exemplified in two Particulars; from the first part of the Sixteenth Verse,

And he would fain have filled
his belly with the Husks
which the Swine did eat.

I H A V E already represented to you
1. The Prodigal's Misery, from Verse the
fourteenth; *And when he had spent all, there
arose a mighty famine in that Land, and he
began to be in want.*

2. The

2. The Course he took for his Relief, from Verse the fifteenth; *And he went and joyned himself to a Citizen of that Countrey; and he sent him into his fields to feed Swine.*

3. I come now, in the last place, to shew the Ineffectualness of that Course in order to his Relief, from the sixteenth Verse; *And he would fain have filled his belly with the Husks which the Swine did eat, and no man gave unto him.*

In the former Verse the Prodigal found employment in his strait, such as it was, he was *sent into the field to feed Swine*; but yet he got not a subsistence by it. He had work, but no wages; not so much as bread to eat. His work was to feed Swine, and he would have been content to feed with them, if he might have had it. *He would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the Swine did eat, but no man gave unto him.*

So that this Verse sets forth the insufficiency and ineffectualness of the Prodigal's course he steer'd to supply and relieve himself in his extream straits. He was content with worse employment than the Gibeonites, who were made *hewers of wood, and drawers of water to all the Congregation of Israel*. This was a worthy service towards the Prodigal's feeding Swine: And their mouldy bread, old garments, and old shoes and clouted, were brave clothes and diet towards the Prodigal's feeding on Swines-meat, the husks that they did eat and feed on, and glad too.

Quest. But what were these husks?

Ans. It's plain they were Swines-meat. And these *κρέμνα*, here called husks, as some of the Learned observe, were *Egyptian figs*; a course unwholesome

some fruit, not fit for man's meat, but Swines. And *Pliny* saith, the rind of them was that which was eaten, and therefore they are called husks. They were a little sweet, but very hard of concoction, and the juyce very unwholesome. Yet this Prodigal wished for these *Egyptian* figs, these husks that were Swines meat, as the *Israelites* did for the Leeks, and Garlick, and Onions of *Egypt*; *But no man gave unto him*, (*i. e.*) he could not get enough to fill his belly: He still missed of content and satisfaction.

For the spiritual meaning, it shews us, as I before hinted, the ineffectualness of this mans course, who is the Representative of all natural mens seeking relief in Conscience-straits and troubles, when they come to be convinced sinners. And the words hold forth four things.

1. That the things of this World, which natural mens hearts would feed on for content, and satisfaction of their lusts, are but Husks and Swines meat without God. As Swine in the fifteenth Verse signify worldly and sensual men, that live upon their lusts; so these Husks, or Swines meat, signify the things of the World, *the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life*, which carnal mens souls seeks after. 1 John 2. 16.

2. Whereas it is said, that *he would fain have filled his belly with the Husks that the Swine did eat*; it shews the property of natural men in Conscience-straits, *viz.* That they would sit down with the basest things of this World with ease, rather than return to God.

3. When

3. Whereas it's said, *and no man gave him*; it shews, that nothing shall be able to give a sinners troubled Conscience relief and comfort, nothing of this World, when God means to bring him home to himself.

4. That the lowest step of a sinners misery is not to see and feel himself in a sinful and dangerous state; but to see himself without remedy, and to find all refuges to fail him. Of these in their Order.

Doctr.

That the things of this World, on which a natural man's heart would feed without God, and in which he would satisfy himself, if he could, are but trash, or, as here they are called, Husks and Swines meat.

μεμαδαγμα-
τα and περι-
βουα signi-
fie the filth of
filth.

What the World counted the Apostles of Jesus Christ, *filth and refuse*, 1 Cor. 4. 13. and the Chaldeans the Jews in their Captivity, Lam. 3. 45. *off-scouring and refuse*: why thus the Holy Ghost makes no more of the things of this World, when the heart is set on them instead of God, but Husks or Swines meat. Look upon the best of this World, and it is no better to a sinner of a troubled Conscience, being in fear of Gods wrath.

Esth. 5.

1 Sam. 12. 21.

Power, parts, riches, honour, pleasure, all these in conjunction availed not *Haman*, when his spirit was perplexed; nor *Ahitophel*, nor *Saul*, nor *Judas*, nor *Cain*, when an evil Spirit vexed them. *Samuel* calls them *vain things that cannot profit, because they are vain*. God calls them so, and men who have made trial of them, have found them so. Let *Solomon* speak for all; he found all *vanity of vanities*,

vanities, yea, and vexation of spirit; nothing, and worse than nothing, *Eccles. 1. 2.*

And the Devil himself thinks them so; and therefore he would have given all the Kingdoms of the World, had it been in his power, for one bow of Jesus his knee. And though he use honour, and pleasure, and silver, and gold, as baits to tempt men to sin, yet he values them not himself. Matth. 4.

A House full of silver and gold, as *Balaam* said to the Servants of *Balak*, are but trifles to the Devil, saving as they are bait and temptation to men to sin. What is a flie or a worm to a man, but as they are his baits to catch fish? Num. 22. 18.

And at last the men of this world find the things of this world lighter than vanity, as the Psalmist saith of men of high degree; *Riches profit not in the day of wrath.* Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath. Psalm. 62. 9.
Prov. 11. 4.
Zeph. 3. 18.

And the things of the world, to which men grip'd in Conscience for sin, and with fear of wrath, are wont to go for ease, are but husks and trash in this Case, in a double comparifon.

1. In comparifon of the Soul of man. And

2. In comparifon of the Grace of God.

1. In comparifon of the Soul of every man, and that in a double respect.

1. As to the great difproportion between the Soul of man and the things of this world. Man's Soul is of divine extraction; it is the off-fpring of God; *God breathed into man the breath of life, and he became a living Soul.* And therefore something Divine must sustain the Soul. Acts 17. 28.
Gen. 2. 7.

But all the things of this world are of an earthly original, all came out of the Chaos, as man's body did, which was formed of the dust of the ground : So that that which feeds the Body will not feed the Soul. And however the more choice things of the world, as honours, riches, pleasures, make a fair shew, and a goodly appearance; yet it is but to the phansie or sensual faculties : As it was said of King *Agrippa* and *Berenice*, came into the place of Judicature with great pomp; or as it is in the Greek, with great phantasie. Now if the greatest of these outward things cannot satisfie the Soul of man, much less can they satisfie the troubled Conscience of a convinced sinner.

Acts 25. 23.
μὴ δὲ πικρῶς
καταλαβῶν.

2. And again it is considerable, That the greatest things of this world, and the greatest share of them, have been, and are bestowed on Reprobates, and such as God hates; as he said of *Esau*, *I hated Esau*; I rejected him, left him to himself, and his own lusts and ways, as he did the Nations or Gentiles in times past; he left *Esau* to be prophane *Esau*.

Mal. 1. 3.

Acts 14. 16.

Heb. 12.

Gen. 27. 39.

Yet God gave to *Esau* large earthly possessions : *Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above; and thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck.* So he did within an hundred and twenty years, 2 Kings 8. 20. and so continued for Eight hundred years and above; yet *Esau* was hated of God.

Psal. 7.

Now things that are given even to Reprobates as their Portion in this life, they can have no relieving and refreshing influence on afflicted Consciences, and poor Souls under the sense of God's wrath. That which gives any ease or true lasting rest to a sinners perplexed Conscience, must be that which can bring

a sinner near to God, and into his saving favour again; and nothing but the blood of Jesus Christ can do this: But now in Christ Jesus, *Ye who were sometimes far off are made nigh, through the blood of Christ.* Eph. 2. 13.

The union of the Body and Soul of a man is by his own blood; but that which unites a man to God again, is the Blood of Jesus Christ.

Though straw and hay nourish a Beast, yet it will not nourish a man, unless God give a man the heart of a Beast, as he did *Nebuchadnezzar*, Dan. 4.

So the things of this world may nourish the lusts of worldly men, but they cannot relieve a Soul that hungers and thirsts after the pardon of sin, and peace of Conscience; they are altogether useless to a sinner in his spiritual misery; they can neither ease the pains, nor supply the needs of such a Soul. For that pain is from the sense of the displeasure and wrath of God; And what can worldly things do in the asswaging of this pain?

If a perplexed sinner go for ease to any thing of this world, he does as *Saul*, when he went to the Witch to resolve him in his present straits; or as *Israel*, when in their sickness, they sent to the *Assyrian*; and as *Judah*, when they felt their wound, sent to King *Jareb*: These could not heal them. 1 Sam. 28. Hos. 5. 13.

Quest. But have not some men ease in ther gripes of Conscience by their recourse to the things of this world? As it may be *Cain* had by building a City; so some by Dogs, and Hawks, and Horfes, and other sensual pleasures, as *Lewes* Cardinal of *Aquitain*: Some in taking up their minds and thoughts on their riches and grandure in this world, as that man our Saviour spake of, who said to his Soul, *Soul*, Luke 12. 19.

thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

Ans. I answer, such men may have some ease for the present, as an aking tooth by the use of some Medicines, but no Cure. These things may cast a sinners Conscience into a sleep or slumber, as rocking does a Child that cries; I but Conscience will waken again, and in greater pain. The wrath of God felt in a sinners Conscience, is too great a wound for so weak a Plaister as the world to cure. The things of this world may suit well with worldly mens lusts, and evil concupiscence; as some women find pleasure sometimes in eating trash, and children in eating coles and dirt; but it puts them to pain afterwards. As *Eve* did in eating the forbidden fruit; it agreed well with her Lust, but it did not so with her Conscience. Those things that please mens Lusts, do after grieve and trouble their Consciences.

2. The things of this world are but trash to a troubled Conscience for sin, in respect of Grace: Its Grace that relieves the Conscience in trouble; the free Grace of God in Christ towards lost sinners. O when the wounded spirit comes to see, that *where sin abounds, grace doth much more abound*; this is a healing Plaister for a sinners sore within.

And men may take notice of the vast difference betwixt the things of this world and grace, not only towards, but in a man.

1. The best things of this world are but of short continuance; *the fashion of the world passeth away*: But Grace is of an eternal nature, it is glory begun; and Conscience in man is an immortal faculty, it never dieth. And so Conscience must have ease and

peace.

Rom. 5. 20.

1. Cor. 7. 31.

peace by that which is immortal like it self; and the
Left of this world is not so.

2. None of the things of this world can evidence
God's love to a man, or a man's conversion to God. Eccles. 9. 1.
No man's Election or Calling can be evidenced to
him by any thing of this world. The Apostle cau-
tions rich men, that they *trust not in uncertain ri-*
ches; some render it, *to the unevidence of riches.* 1 Tim. 6. 17.
They can give no certain evidence of a man's
state towards God. When a rich man falls into
trouble of Conscience, his silver and gold, and lord-
ships, are miserable Comforters; these cannot scat-
ter his fears, nor answer his doubts, nor give any
ease to his perplexed Soul.

C H A P. XXIV.

Containeth the Application of the foregoing Doctrine, in four Uses.

I. **A**ND First, This may rectifie our opinion of the things of this world; when we set them in God's stead, they are but Swines meat, and they are swinish that set their hearts upon them, and seek happiness in them. The Psalmist calls himself a Beast, for his conceit of mens being happy in having this world at will.

Psal. 73. 22.

Would any of you think a man the richer for having his Garner full of husks or chaff? yet comparatively these worldly things are such, they are no more to an afflicted Conscience, and prove so at last to all that have confidence in them. And yet how generally are men given over to an injudicious mind in this Case?

Rom. 1. 28.

ἐν τῷ δόξῳ
αὐτοῦ.

Yet the spiritual man, who alone can give a right judgment of things, 1 Cor. 2. 15. he is of Solomon's mind, when returned to his right mind, That whoever seeks satisfaction in the best of this world, shall increase and multiply his vexation of spirit.

Eccles. 1. 2.

Worldly men look on worldly things through a magnifying Glass, a vitiated phantse; but a man of another world as well as this, looks on them through
the

the Glass of God's Word, and his own Experience, and so escapes an error in the Case. The more spiritual a man is, the less he'll mistake in his thoughts of the things of this world.

2. This point is useful to rectify our desires of the things of this world. We may desire them, but not lust after them, as the Children of *Israel* did after flesh. Since the fall of man, man is composed and made up much of desires; his Soul runs out this way in desire after forbidden fruit; *O that I was made* ^{2 Sam. 15. 4.} *Judge in the Land.* So saith the carnal man's Soul, *O that I had this, and that, without end.*

And since the fall, man's desires do commonly corrupt into lust, as *Amnon's* did to *Tamar*. Natural men are taken with the outward appearance of things, as *Samuel* was with *Eliab's* goodly person, ^{1 Sam. 16.} and for that he thought him to be the Lord's anointed. *Esau* phantasied a mess of Pottage better than ^{Gen. 25.} the birth-right.

Well therefore said the Apostle, *They that are af-* ^{Rom. 8. 5.} *ter the flesh, savour the things of the flesh; and they that are after the spirit, the things of the spirit.* The honours, profits, and pleasures of this world relish, and go down better with the one; and the love and grace of God, interest in Christ, pardon and purging away of sin with the other. *Many say, who will* ^{Psal. 4. 6.} *show us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy Countenance upon me. Whom have I in heaven but* ^{Psal. 73. 25.} *thee?* Take what you will of the world from this man, and if you can give him God in the room, he is well. *The Lord is my portion, saith my Soul.* But ^{Lam. 3. 24.} if you can take away God from him, and give him what you will, yet he complains; as he did concerning his Idols, in *Judges* 18. 24. *Ye have taken*
away

away my gods ; and what is this that ye say unto me :
What aileth thee ?

2 Tim. 4. 10.

Pope Zachary
condemn'd
Virgilius a Bi-
shop, for hold-
ing there be
Antipodes.

Heb. 11. 13.

Heb. 11. 40.

3. This discovers the great difference that is between meer natural men, and men that have grace. The one looks at present things ; *Demas hath forsaken me, and embraced this present world* ; such men are *blind, and see not afar off*, 2 Pet. 2. 9. Heaven is a Countrey out of sight to such men ; and a world to come is as uncouth to them as a world in the Moon, and as the Antipodes are to some. But men who have grace look more at things which are not seen, and eternal, 2 Cor. 4. 18. They see and enjoy Promises that are afar off. Grace sees as far as glory. And when the men of this world are full of the things of this world, and they empty ; these see, and satisfy themselves with some better things that God hath provided for them.

2 Kings 19. 13.

4. Let the people of God receive the word of Exhortation : Take heed that you degenerate not from the nature and temper of Saints ; be not like natural men in your fondness of the things of this world. If God find your hearts going to and fro in the earth, as Satan said of himself, or like the hearts of carnal men ; he will rebuke you for it some way or other, as he did *Elias*, when he said to him in the Wilderness, *What doest thou here Elias* ? Desires after the things of this world you may have, but gaged and bounded, as the waves of the Sea are.

Take heed your desires corrupt not into lust ; and one of your great works, as Christians, is done.

Indeed, if there should be no desire, a Saints earthly enjoyments would have no sweet in them; where desire fails, the sweet of Creature comfort fails. Ecclef. 12.5. What is bread to a man that hath no appetite? or drink, if he have not thirst?

Yet desire to these outward things corrupted into lust, is worse than no desire: So was *Israel's* lusting after flesh, and *Amnon's* lusting after *Tamar*, and *Gebazi's* lusting after a reward at such a season as that was wherein he did it. Corrupt desires will corrupt the things desired. Thus they shall be hurtful to you, as *Saul* was to *Israel*, or *Delilah* to *Sampson*.

If a man have a distempered thirst, the more he drinks, the more his distemper grows upon him; though he drink much, it satisfies little: the way is to get his preternatural thirst cured, for it cannot be satisfied.

Thus, the stronger desires are after the things of the world, the less content there is in them. *The eye is not satisfied with seeing; and he that loveth abundance shall not be satisfied with increase.* Ecclef. 2.8. & 5.10.

Therefore if you feel a thirst in your hearts after the things of this world, get the Distemper heal'd; never expect to have your thirst satisfied.

Quest. But how may I cure it?

Ans. Why, exchange your carnal lustings into spiritual: *Covet earnestly the best things.* The better you taste the waters that Christ gives you, that is the grace and comfort of his spirit, the less thirst you will be after the things of this world. 1 Cor. 12.31. John 4.14.

It is one of Solomon's sayings, Eccles. 10. 19. *That money answers all things, i. e. all outward things :* and this is as true a saying, That the Spirit answers all things, all good things. Compare *Matth. 7. 11.* with *Luke 11. 13.* In the first place our Lord Jesus saith — *how much more shall your Father in heaven give good things to them that ask him?* In the other, *How much more shall your heavenly Father give the holy Spirit to them that ask him?* Christ makes the holy Spirit to answer all good things. And thus much for the first Doctrine in the sixteenth Verse,

That the things of this world are comparatively but Husks or Swines meat, when separated from the enjoyment of God himself.

C H A P. XXV.

Sheweth, The Property of Natural men, in chusing to sit down with any base things in the world for ease, rather than they will go to God for it. From the same part of the sixteenth Verse,

And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks which the Swine did eat.

TH E R E is a second Doctrine contained in this first part of the sixteenth Verse. For, whereas it is said, that *he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the Swine did eat*, this shews us, the property of Natural men, when troubled in Conscience for sin, is,

That they would sit down with any base things Doctr. 2.
in the world for ease, rather than go to God for it.

Something of this was spoken on the fifteenth Verse;
I shall not add much.

Gen. 4. 14.

When *Cain's* Conscience vexed him, he humbled not himself to God, but quarell'd with him; *Behold, thou hast driven me this day from the face of the earth——and every one that findeth me shall slay me.* And when God put him besides this fear, in *u. 15.* *Whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him;* yet he applied not himself humbly to God, but *went out from the presence of the Lord, v. 16.* And what went he out for? for rest: He travest the world for it, as that unclean Spirit did; and he seats himself in the most pleasant place he could find on earth, on the East of *Eden.* *Eden* was called *The Garden of God.* There he built a City, and called it after the name of his son *Enoch;* and all this to charm his vexed spirit.

Matth. 12.

Gen. 4. 16.

Ezek. 28.

1 Sam. 16. 23.

Thus when the evil Spirit was upon *Saul,* he sought not to God, but for sweet Musick; and indeed the requisiteness of the pain puts them upon any thing next for present ease. The terrours of God on the Conscience of a sinner, are worse than the fits of the stone, or any other tormenting Disease: They are sparkles of hell fire.

Eph. 2. 12.

Gen. 3. 10.

But yet the main Reason, why men in pains of Conscience for sin make any diversions from God for quiet and ease, is, because men naturally are unwilling to come to God; they are unacquainted with him, being, as it were, *without God in the world.* They know the world better than God. And

Again, their estrangedness from God makes them afraid of him; as *Adam* when he had sinned was. As stout as many sinners seem to be for a time; yet

yet the time will come, that it will be with such sinners as with the sinners of Zion, *Isa. 33. 14.* *The sinners of Zion are afraid; who amongst us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?* Kings, and great men, and rich men, and the chief Captains, and the mighty men, will hide themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the Mountains, and say to them, *fall on us, and* Rev. 6. 15, 16. *hide us*—— It is, or shall be with guilty Consciences, as it is with the Devils, who *believe* James 2. 19. *and tremble.*

Uses.

1. This shews us what enemies Conscience-smitten sinners are to their own Conversion; they had rather stay in a far Countrey, than return to their Father's House. The Elect themselves, if they might have their own way, would be content to remain in a state of Nature with any peace they could get; the practice of this Prodigal, as the Representative of sinners, shews it

2. Let no man troubled in Conscience for sin, think of getting any peace that will be to any purpose, but what they get from God, and his Word. The grieved Conscience, that has peace any other way, is but as a broken bone ill set, the pains must be repeated in setting again. Your peace is not right, till your trouble send you to God, and his Gospel grace in Christ.

Observe what the Lord said in *Ephraim's* Case, *Hof. 13. 13.* *He is an unwise son, for he should not have stayed long in the place of the breaking forth of children.* Such is the folly of poor convinced sinners, as to check their repentance towards God, when God is as it were in travail of their new birth. But happy are broken sinners, when they come to that in *Hof. 14. 3.* *Asshur shall not save us, we will not ride upon horses (i.e.) into Egypt for help; — for in thee, O God, the fatherless findeth mercy.* Such poor souls City of Refuge is that glorious and gracious Name of God, which he proclaimed before *Moses*; *The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin.* Men and Angels cannot imagine a better course for sinners troubled in Conscience to take, than to resolve as those Lepers did; *Why sit we here till we die? If we say, we will enter into the City, the famine is there, and we shall die there; if we sit still here, we die also: Now therefore come, and let us fall into the host of the Syrians; if they save us alive, we shall live, and if they kill us, we shall but die.*

Why thus do you reason, and resolve when under the apprehension of your lost condition; if we flie to any Refuge but to God, we shall die; and if we sit still in our sinful state, we shall assuredly die; Therefore I will go to God, *I'll fall into his hands,* as *David* said in his great strait; if he save me, I shall live; if not, I shall but die. O poor sinner, venter on God in Christ: Thou hast heard he is a merciful

Exod. 34. 6.

2 Kings 7. 4.

2 Sam. 24.

merciful God, as *Benhadad's* Captains said to him of the Kings of *Israel*; *We have heard that the Kings of Israel are merciful Kings, let us put sackcloth on our loins, and ropes upon our heads, and go out to the King of Israel, peradventure he will save thy life.*

Why so let the self-convinced and condemned sinner go with such self-abasing and self-judging to God, and cast himself upon his mercy and free grace in in *Jesus Christ*: O resolve on this way; and say as *Esther*, *I will go to God, and if I perish, I perish: Salvation is of the Lord.* Psal. 3. ult. Jonah 2. 9. So much for the second Doctrine from the first part of the sixteenth Verse.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXVI.

Wherein is observed, That when God hath a purpose to convert a sinner, he suffers nothing to yield relief and comfort but himself. With the Reasons wherefore he doth thus. And the Uses we are to make hereof; from the latter part of the sixteenth Verse,

And no man gave unto him.

FROM these words we may learn,

Doctr. 3.

That when God hath a purpose to bring a convinced sinner to conversion, he will stop all ways of relief and comfort but from himself: He will disable all other Refuges.

So that such a man may traverse the world over for peace, as *Solomon* did for happiness, and for certain receive disappointment. Every Refuge besides
God

God will say as the Sea and the Depth did, *It is not in me.* *Pass over to Chittim, there also shalt thou have no rest.* Sin and Conscience will find out the convinced sinner every where, till Christ hath said to him, as he did to that man, *Be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven;* and as he said to that woman, *Thy sins are forgiven, go in peace.* Job 28.14.
Isa. 23.12.
Matth. 9.2.
Luke 7.

For sinners troubled in Conscience to think they shall find ease and rest in any other Refuge, it is but a cheat upon the Conscience, a present charm. It's like *Sampson's* sleeping on *Delila's* lap, a snare and forerunner of mischief to his soul.

It is a sad sign that God intends not such a kindness to a sinner in bringing him home to himself, when he sees him running to Self-refuges, and says, *Let him alone;* as he said of *Ephraim*, *Ephraim is joyned to Idols, let him alone.* Hos. 4.17.

O! it's a much better sign, when the Lord hedges up such a sinners way to false Sanctuaries, as he did theirs *Hos. 2. 6.* when God charges all other Sanctuaries but himself not to succour such a sad sinner; help him not, ease him not, supply him not, satisfy him not, this is a mercy to a sinner; and a good sign, when the Lord brings a sinners thoughts of relief into so narrow a compass, as to seek it in himself, and no where else; and makes all other Refuges say to him, as the King of *Israel* did to the woman that cried to him for help in a time of famine; *How should I help thee, if God help thee not?* 2 Kings 6.

When God will save a sinner, he will trouble his Conscience, and let it sting, and the wound bleed, till he indeed draw in his eyes and thoughts to relief by Christ. When a man places a Net in the water to catch fish, or on the land to get fowl, he'l

stop all hopes of escape : And so will God, when he purposes to save a man ; he'll stop all inlets of peace and comfort, but what is from himself.

Matth.9.

It was happy for that diseased woman, that she found no help from any of her Physicians ; for by this means she became acquainted with Jesus Christ, and was fully cured by him. God will beat a sinner from every bush, under which he thinks to shelter himself on this side Christ, and Christ as offer'd by the Gospel, when he intends his conversion and salvation.

Reasons of the Doctrine.

Reas.1.

Rom.11.7.

If God did not thus by those he means to save his Election would be frustrate, and the Scripture would fail, which saith, *The election hath obtained it.* For the Elect would persist in opposition to their Conversion, as well as other men ; there is no difference between them and others, till their Calling make it. There is a difference in Gods purpose, not in theirs ; the Elect are as willing as other men to stay in their natural state. As *Lot* was loth to leave *Sodom*, as well as his sons in law ; but God being merciful to him, the Angel brought him forth, that he should not perish in the City.

Gen.19.

John 6.44.

No man by nature hath any desire to a state of grace, but the very Elect resist, till *the Father draw them* ; as *Reuben* and *Gad* had no mind to go over *Jordan* into *Canaan*. Therefore when the Spirit does his office in convincing such of sin, he lets them not find rest at any Sanctuary on this side God himself.

If

If a convinced sinner, a sinner troubled within, *Reas. 2.* should meet with any ease and rest in other Refuges; he would love these more than God. If a wounded man find a weed in the field that gives him ease, he'll love that weed more than the best and sweetest flowers in a Garden. Men will commend most the Medicine that helps their distemper, and asswages their pain.

So that if God did not make a sinners Refuge bitter to him, as well as his sins, he would love such things better than God. As the *Israelites* straits in the wilderness made them like *Egypt* better than *Canaan*, because of the flesh-pots and onyons, &c. they had there their fill of. And therefore God will break, or empty Cisterns, that men may have more mind to the Spring.

When God brings the sinner out of trouble of Conscience, he does it in such a way, as a man may see that he is beholding to God only for quenching the sparks of Hell in his Conscience.

Hereby God magnifies his own Free-grace, in that *Reas. 3.* after a sinners trial elsewhere for ease to no purpose, he will cure the wound himself. God does not do or say in the like case as men do; as he said in *Terence*, *Cum nemini obtrudi potest, itur ad me.* I am thy last Refuge; if thou couldest have had peace any where else, thou hadst not come to me.

But God is free in the case, that he may thereby honour his Free-grace; as he said of *Ephraim*, *Isa. 57. 17, 18.* *I hid me, and was wrath. Ephraim* has a taste of the wrath of God in his soul; and what then, does he humble himself to God? No; but *he went on frowardly in the way of his heart*; he shirk'd and shifted up and down to get off the

trouble, but could not : And what then ? did God leave him thus ? No ; *I have seen his ways , and will heal him.* O how greatly does God here commend his Free-grace to sinners ! He useth to say to poor undone sinners as he did to *Israel, O Israel , thou hast destroyed thy self, but in me is thy help.* There is none other that can save thee.

Hos. 13. 9, 10.

Reas. 4.

Psal. 51. 13.

The Lord doth thus to make such a sinner, when converted, a way-mark to other conscience-smitten sinners after him. After *David's* recovery from his fall by his great sin, he taught other sinners the way to God : And experience made *Luther* a Soul-affecting preacher to distressed Consciences. When Ministers speak to sinners more from bowels than from brains, this is likely to affect and effect most.

Application.

1. This informs us, That God hath a secret work on the hearts of sinners, whom he will convert, towards their conversion ; while they themselves are hindering it. When the sinner labours under convictions, which God intends shall be to conversion, God keeps him from despair on the one hand, and from presuming on Self-refuges on the other, that he may neither wilfully refuse relief, nor lean upon broken Reeds ; that he neither perish on the Rocks or Sands, but flie to God, betake himself to the Lord as the only sufficient Sanctuary : *There is no God besides me, a just God, and a Saviour ; look unto me, and be ye saved.*

Isa. 45. 21, 22.

2. This

2. This shews, that a man's estate is never the worse liking, when he can settle his Conscience, his unquiet Conscience, with nothing on this side God himself, and his Free-grace in Christ. Art thou troubled in Conscience for sin, and canst find no satisfaction or ease, though thou hast tried twenty ways? why, all this may be; because God intends to do the Cure himself, and make thee to know it; that so when thy Conscience is settled, thou maiest say as the Psalmist said, *This is the Lord's doing*, Psal. 118. 23. *and it is marvellous in mine eyes.* When the man that had an infirmity thirty eight years, could not be healed by the Pool of *Bethesda*, because he could not get in of himself, Christ himself healed him. John 5.

That troubled sinner is in a dangerous condition; whose trouble of Conscience meets with peace on this side the Free-grace of God in Jesus Christ; it's a sign God leaves that man to his deceitful Refuges and Sanctuaries, where he sculks at present from the sense of sin and wrath: As he did by *Ephraim*, when he took up with Idols, *Let him alone*, says God; let him see what will come on't. Hos. 4. 17.

And on the other hand, if in thy Conscience-trouble and distress thou hast been beaten from bush to bush; where thou thoughtest to have had comfort, but still hast met with disappointments; live in some hope that God means thee good, that he has in his own thoughts named thee *Ruamah*, Hos. 2. 7. *having obtained mercy.*

O let no convinced sinner think himself the better, because he hath company to divert his troubled thoughts, or worldly business to take up his thoughts, or the thoughts of some good thing in him.

himself to please and stroke himself with, or some good purposes to be better hereafter; alas, these are but charms to get a little ease for present: They do but hinder thy thorow humiliation for sin, and thy sinful state, which is previously needful to thy thorow conversion to God.

It were a better sign, that all Refuges should fail thee on this side thy looking after God himself for peace with him, and from him.

And if God should not do thus with men, they would never get beyond the first step of humiliation in their sinful state: For so soon as they have a sense of sin, and are afraid of wrath, they begin to look about them for a hedge, or a house, to get from the storm, in hopes it will be over; therefore God disables their shifts, and beats them from one to another, till from all, that when they find no footing on dry ground, they may, like the Dove, fly to the Ark. God allures sinners, whom he will convert and save, into the Wildernesse, and *there speaks to their hearts*.

Hos. 2. 14.

When you are brought to this failure of expectations, *We looked for peace, and there is no good; and for the time of healing, but behold trouble*; now you will fall upon plain dealing with your own souls, and with God, and cast your selves upon mercy and Free-grace: So it follows, *Jer. 14. 20. We acknowledge, O Lord, our wickedness, for we have sinned against thee; do not abhor us for thy Name sake.*

Jer. 14. 19.

I have been the larger in the Application of this point, because of the errour and mistake of poor souls on both hands: Some in betaking themselves to false Refuges in their gripes of Conscience.

For

For though there were many Cities of Refuge in the Law, yet there is but one in the Gospel; that is Christ, and the Free-grace of God through him.

Others again, disquieted in Conscience by, and for sin, and seek, and can find no rest for their souls under Heaven; they think themselves quite lost, and that they shall perish for ever; whereas it is a better sign to them than they are aware of, *viz.* That Christ means to bring them from all other Sanctuaries to himself; *Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden; and I will give you rest.* Matth. 11. 28.

3. This may inform us, What a mercy it is to God's people to be disappointed in many things: their hearts gad after, thinking of content and self-pleasing in them. God may, and often doth disappoint them for their good; he knows that if they should have them, and content in them, they would be a snare to them, as *Gideon's Ephod* was to his house. When things prosper not in your hands that would draw your hearts off from God, it is a mercy to you. Judges 8: 27.

They shall follow after their lovers, but shall not overtake them; and by this means they resolved on a return unto God, and there fixed their hearts. Hos. 2. 6, 7.

O look upon it as a kindness from God, when he crosses you thus, as *David* did the reproofs of the Righteous; *Let the righteous smite me, and it shall be a kindness.* The Lord did *David* a good turn in taking away his child, though he begged so hard for the life of it. Psal. 141. 5.

Let us therefore learn to look on't as a kindness, when God will not let us be at hearts ease in Creature-injoy-

Luke 9.33.

injoyments. Peter did not wish his own happiness so much as he thought, when he said on Mount Tabor to Jesus, *Master, it is good for us to be here.* The Lord's end in giving check to our satisfaction in the Creature things, or persons, or places, may be, that we may seek it in himself, and to bring us to say by proof, *All my springs are in thee.*

Psal. 87. ult.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXVII.

Sheweth, That the lowest step of a sinner's misery is, to see himself remediless by any carnal means whatsoever : Together with the Application hereof; from the whole sixteenth Verse,

And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks which the Swine did eat; and no man gave unto him.

I Come now to the fourth and last Doctrine from the sixteenth Verse,

That when a man feels himself in a lost condition, and withal sees no way of relief, this is the lowest step of his misery to his own sense; yet in Gods method and meaning may be a fair step to mercy in his Conversion. Doctr. 4.

Hos. 2. 15.

When the Prodigal was in such want, that he would have eaten what men gave to Swine, and none gave unto him, this, to his own apprehension, was the very depth of misery, and yet it proved the inlet of mercy: As the *valley of Achor*, or the valley of trouble, was given by God to *Israel* for a *door of hope*. Bare conviction of sin leaves a man as far from God as before, till he be beaten out of all his creeping holes. It's true, the first work of the Spirit in order to Conversion is conviction of sin, that this man is a sinner. I but, saith this man, so are others, so are all men. Therefore the Spirit goes further, and convinces this man that he has no grace, but is in a state of sin. Otherwise, though men be convinced that they are sinners, yet they think they have some grace; and so their opinion of grace keeps out grace. It's a step towards a state of grace, for a man to be thorowly convinced that he has no grace.

A man is never the poorer for casting away counterfeit grace; that which he thought to be grace, but is not. He that wakens out of a rich Dream, and finds it not with him as he dreamed, is never the poorer, because he never had the riches he dreamed of.

Application.

Labour than for a double conviction in order to Conversion; a conviction of sin, and a conviction of the vanity of all Sanctuaries but God himself, against whom men have sinned. Sight and sense of
sin

sin and wrath, will send men to a Citizen of a far Countrey, to something of this World for relief; but experience of the unprofitableness of this way sends them to their Father's house, where is help in deed.

The more a man is emptied of himself, and the Creature, the nearer he is to God. It is darkest a little afore day break. When a convinced sinner is at worst for relief in his own thoughts, he is fair for it.

Quest. But are there not some sinners troubled in Conscience by sin, that find no releif in the World, and yet look not after it in God; as *Cain* and *Saul*, and the men that were scorched with great heat, and yet blasphemed God? Rev. 16.9.

Ans. There is no preparative to a sinner's Conversion that works further in a sinner than God leads it on: Converts are *born of the will of God*, and not their own. John 1.13. The Plow is not the cause of the earths bearing fruit, but the Seed that is cast into it: though there be plowing and harrowing, and the first and latter rain; yet there can be no fruit, if there be no seed.

It's true, that God ordinarily brings about a sinners Conversion by preparatives; which although we should say they work Physically, yet can they go no further than their own nature, as preparatives, and so can never finish the work.

It was not the water of *Jordan* that cured *Naa-* 2 Kings 5.
man's leprosie so much as the will of God put forth in it, and the word of God that commanded it. Though the wax be melted, yet it's the owners hand that sets on the Seal, and makes the impression. A man may be convinced of his sinful state, and helpless

Job 38.2.

Psalm 115.1.

state, and yet not be converted, except the will and power of God work up conviction so far. It was not the whirl-wind, but the powerful voice of God in it, that humbled *Job* to silence and self-abhorrence. And therefore men should give God the glory of the effectual working of all their preparatives to Conversion: *Not unto us, Lord, not unto us, but unto thy Name give the glory, for thy mercy and for thy truths sake.* When God hath a will to save a sinner, he puts powerful and effectual influences into the preparatives of his Conversion.

Object. But then a convinced and conscience-afflicted sinner is still at an uncertainty for his Conversion; when beaten off of all his Refuges, his Conversion still depends on God's will and power.

Ezek.

Answer. I answer that such a man is not at that uncertainty as before: For first, he is at a certainty for God's power, that that cannot fail him, though all his other helps have fail'd. And secondly, if the turning of the Scales hang upon God's will, his solemn invitations and promises may encourage him as to the will of God in the case; — *why will ye die, O ye house of Israel?* It's mens own wills, and not God's, that damns them. Though there may be ground of a sinner's despair in himself, yet there is none in God. God hath so set forth himself to a sinner, both as to his power and will, as to leave no cause of despair. God hates and abhors the despair of a sinner more than all his other sins:

The Devil cannot revenge himself more on God, than to bring reproach on him by a sinner's despair; for herein the Devil makes the sinner likest to himself: He is himself a desperate sinner, and he would have other sinners to be so. This is one of the chiefest
sins

sins that Satan aims at in his temptations to sin; his tempting to other sins is to dispose men to this; as wooll hath first a tincture of a lighter colour, that it may receive a deeper die.

And let convinced and self-judged sinners consider, that despair puts them actually under the punishment of Hell in part, when as other sins only bind them over to condemnation; even the greatest of Gospel sins, which is unbelief: *He shall convince the world of sin, because they believe not in me; and he that believeth not shall be damned.* He is condemned already, Sentence is passed upon him, but it is not executed; but in a sinner's despair, execution is begun.

John 16. 9.
Mark 16. 16.
John 3. 18.

O then let not sinners in trouble of Conscience for sin consult with reason disorder'd and mated by temptation in the case: This reason is low of stature, like *Zacheus*, and cannot see mercy and free grace in the throng and press of his sins; but standing on the Promise, as *Zacheus* did on the Tree, on that Promise in *Isa. 55. 7.* or of the like nature, he will be in sight of hope.

A man may have mighty sins, but not almighty; but the mercy of God is almighty mercy. The mercy of God is unlimited to those that do not limit it; that is, who seek for cleansing and purging mercy, as well as pardoning. And therefore for sinners that would be penitent, as well as pardoned sinners, for such to say in their hearts, *Can God forgive my sins?* is as great a sin, as it was to *Israel* to say in their straits, *Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?*

Amos 5. 12.

Remember and consider what the Lord saith in this case, *My thoughts are not your thoughts;* he can pardon abundantly.

Isa. 55. 7.

The

The very holiness of God inclines him to mercy, as man's wickedness inclines him to cruelty: *The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.* The Devil, who is the greatest of sinners, is disposed to the greatest revenge and cruelty: he would revenge himself on God if he could; and therefore he belies God to man, as well as he does man to God: As he charged *Job* with hypocrisie to God, so he charged God with cruelty to *Job*. *Doeſt thou ſtill retain thy integrity? Curſe God and die.* There is no ſuch thing in the Devil, as the leaſt pity towards any ſinner. But God's holineſs diſpoſes him to pity poor ſinners, when their Souls are in trouble for ſin. *Thus ſaith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eterni-ty, whoſe Name is holy; I dwell in the high and ho-ly place, with him alſo that is of a contrite and humble ſpirit, to revive the ſpirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite one.*

The holy God can be righteous in pardoning ſinners, as well as in damning them for ſin; *If we confeſſ our ſins, he is juſt and faithful to forgive us our ſins* — Oh therefore, if there be any one that the Spirit of God hath convinced of their dangerous and damnable ſtate in ſin, and ſet their Conſciences on the rack by the ſpirit of bondage, and withal beaten them from all falſe refuge, let ſuch come to God, and try him.

Obj. But is it likely that God will harbour ſuch a wretched ſinner as I, who make him my laſt refuge, when all others have failed me, and now I come to him on meer neceſſity?

Anſw. Yes, meer neceſſity may turn a ſinner's eye to God at firſt. At firſt God *compells men to come into the feaſt.* Sinners are conſtrain'd upon neceſſi-

ty

Prov. 12. 10.

Job 2. 9.

Iſa. 57. 15.

1 John 1. 9.

Luke 14. 23.

ty to betake themselves to God for sanctuary. God allows men to come to him out of self-love at first, though after love to God must keep them with him. It's well that mens sense of their own misery will force them to seek after mercy in God. The Father will suffer those things in a child, which he will not do after. The *Samaritans* believed Jesus at first for the womans words; but after because of his own word. Joh. 4. 39, 41.

That woman which had a bloody Issue was driven to Christ for healing on necessity, for she had spent all on the Physician, and to no purpose; and when all would do nothing, she applied her self to Jesus Christ for cure, and he heals her; and it redounded to his honour, that he could do, and had done that which no other means could do. Matth. 9. 20.

And therefore it is good for poor sinners in their Soul-straits to look at the power and freeness of God's grace, which can and will help them, when other refuges have fail'd them, that they may magnifie God's grace above all.

God's time of giving grace, is when he may have the honour of it: Therefore *he gives grace to the humble*, because he knows the humble will give him the glory of his grace. James 4. 6.

But then, though a sinner may go to God of pure necessity, and self-love at first; yet when he is come to God, he must and will abide with God in love to God himself; he will now say, *It is good for me to draw near to God.* Psal. 73. 28.

And now let the presuming sinner live in sin, and the convinced troubled sinner despair of mercy from God, at their own eternal peril. For the first, God will assuredly curse that sinner, who blesteth himself in his sins. Deut. 29. 19, 20.
And

And for the convinced and conscience-pricked sinner, who hath mercy offered him by the Gospel, and yet despairs of mercy from God by Christ, it argues a defect in that sinners humiliation for sin : For it is not so much the greatness of sin, as the greatness of the sinners spirit, that is the cause of his despair. To those Jews who said, *There is no hope, we shall pine away in our sins*, God hath said, *Your words have been stout against me*. Wherein say they : *Ye have said, It is in vain to serve God, and so to seek him*.

Jer. 2. 25.

Ezek. 33. 10.

Mal. 3. 13, 14.

I may not doubt to say, that there was never any sinner outed of his sins and himself, who missed of mercy, if he sought it of God. Thus much for the sixteenth verse, with which endeth the first part of the Parable.

F I N I S.

Meditations
UPON THE
PARABLE
OF THE
PRODIGAL SON.

THE
SECOND PART.

By OBADIAH GREW, D.D.

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Medications

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The PUBLISHER to the Serious
R E A D E R.

R E A D E R,

YOU have here the Second Part upon the Parable of the Prodigal Son, which goes through with it. This, as the former, is the substance of several Sermons preached to a plain and honest Auditory; and were therefore purposely suited, by the Reverend Author, not so much to the Learning of some few amongst them, as to the edification of them all. Yet the Reader will find the style, as not hard and cloudy, so neither light and indecorous; but proper and grave, becoming both the Subject and the Author. The Matter, all pure Divinity, naturally arising from the words of the Parable, and every where cleared with the suffrage of other parts of Holy Scripture; and some of the deepest points in Theology, with those learned strokes which have here and there slipt in, accommodated to the capacity of every man. In doing of which, he hath followed the Examples of many other Wise

Fathers of our Church, who in Parish-pulpits have always studied, not only what to say, but what not to say; that they might be thoroughly understood by those, to whom their Discourses were directed.

What is said of Conversion, Free Grace, and Merit, hath ever been very displeasing to some men. And no less the Gospel it self, which was proposed, as a learned man well saith, Tanquam Lapis esset Lydius, ad quem Ingenia Sanabilia explorarentur. Those that will dispute, nothing shall suffice; but it is easie to satisfie them who are resolved to be honest, and humbly to submit their Scholastic Reason, to the unsearchable Wisdom of God. In a word, Whoever, without prejudice, shall make tryal, will find the reading of this Book not a little to conduce, If a bad man, to make him good; and if never so good, to make him better.

I.

MEDITATIONS
UPON THE
PARABLE
OF THE
PRODIGAL SON.
PART II.

CHAP. I.

Distributeth the Second part of the Parable (which describeth the Prodigals return) into its several Branches. Sheweth Divine Grace to be the spring of Conversion, and what man is to do in order to it.

HAVING finished my Meditations on the first Part of the Parable, in which we have a Description of the State of a lost Sinner, to the 16 *vers.* I now come to the Second Part, or the Sinners return and coming into a State of Grace, described in the Prodigals coming to himself, and coming back to his Father, from the 17. *vers.* to part of the 20.

V. r. 17. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my Father have bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with hunger?

18. *I will arise, and go to my Father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee.*
 19. *And am no more worthy to be called thy Son; make me as one of thy hired servants.*
 20. *And he arose and came to his Father.*

In the 16. *vers.* this Prodigals condition was like the Hybernal Solstice, or the depth of Winter. In the 17. *verse* he begins his return towards Spring and Summer; the sap begins to rise from the root to the branches. *And when he came to himself, he said, &c.*

All men act the first part of this Prodigal: his leaving his Fathers house, going into a far Country, mispending his substance or Portion, his being reduced to very great straits, and his very sorry shifts therein. But few act the Second Part, his return to his Fathers house, his solemn Repentance. As but a few of those many Jews that went into captivity, returned back into their own Country. *I will take you one of a city, and two of a family or tribe, and I will bring you to Zion.* 'Tis said, *A remnant shall be saved. And there is a remnant according to the election of grace.*

Alas! how many Sinners dye in a far Country from God, in their natural condition, and never come to the happiness of this lost Son, in his return to his Fathers house!

This 17 *verse* enters us upon the Prodigals Repentance; here he begins to set his Face towards his Fathers house, with as melting a heart as the Children of Israel and Judah did theirs towards Zion, when they came out of Babylon.

His behaviour here is like returning Ephraims; *I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus, Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised as a bull ck unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth. There is much of this, in this Prodigals Repentance, and return to his Father.*

And now he begins to repent, he changes his name from a lost Son, to a Son that is found; from a dead Son, to a Son that

Jer. 3. 14.
Rom. 9. 27.
and 11 5.

Jer. 50. 5.

Jer. 31. 18.

that is alive, vers. 24. *This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.* So that his Father did by him, as the Lord did by his People returning from Captivity; he changed their name. *Thou shalt no more be termed, Forsaken, Isa. 62. 4. but thou shalt be called, Heptzibah, the Lords delight.* And then this Prodigal might say some of Christs words of himself, *I am he that liveth, and was dead.* So remarkably was he raised, as it were from the dead, to a spiritual Life. Rev. i. 18.
Eph. 2. 2.

Now in the Prodigals return to his Fathers house, there are these particulaes observable.

1. His soliloquy or serious Consideration with himself in vers. 17. *And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my Fathers have bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with hunger?*

2. His Resolution in the 18. and 19. verses: *I will arise and go to my father, and say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants.*

3. His Conversion, or its compleating Act, or the Execution of what he had resolv'd upon, in the 20. vers. *and he arose and came to his father, &c.*

1. His return began with advisement with himself.

1. In General, *And when he came to himself.*

2. In two particulars. The consideration of the plenty his Fathers Servants had; And his own scarcity in his distance from his Fathers House, tho he was a Son. *How many hired servants of my father have bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with hunger?*

Now of this great point of the Prodigals Conversion, there will a Question here fall in, fit to be answered, before I come directly to the Words of the Text; and the Question is,

Quest. How this lost Son came to himself, and then to his Father? Whether was the rise and spring of his Repentance from himself and his own will? or was it from the Will of God?

Ans. Surely not from himself, and his own free-will; but it was of God, and his free Grace.

His straits put him upon consideration, and consideration shewed him how irrationally he had acted; he had been led by his Lusts, and not his Reason, and his Conviction was the preparative to his Conversion.

2 Sam. 14. Now as *David* said to the Woman of *Tekoa*, *Is not the hand of Joab with thee in all this?* Truly so, when we look upon this Luxurious mans Conversion, first to himself, and then to his Father; and his ingenuous, melting, and submissive Behaviour herein; we may say, *Is not the hand of God in all this?*
 Psal. 118. v. 23. Yes surely, *This was the Lords doing.*

Jer. 2. God hath a secret work upon mens consciences, before they come to themselves; and when they do come to themselves, and see their woful state, that they grow not desperate, like those *Jews* who said, *There is no hope, no, for I have loved strangers, and after them I will go.* A secret hand of God stops them, as *Paul* did the Jaylor, when upon that terrible breaking open of the Goal, he would have been a *felo de se*, a self-murderer, as *Judas* was in his despair.

Dan. 5. When the Lord hath given a Spirit of Conviction to a Sinner, and set his Conscience a trembling, (as he did *Belsazzars* Joynts and Knees), and intends to save the Sinner; (for he saith not of every Sinner as of *Ephraim*, *He is joined to idols, let him alone*; or as it is in Rev. 22. *He that is filthy, let him be filthy still.*) I say, when God intends to save such a Sinner, he sends a hand to touch his terrified and trembling heart, and to bid him not to fear, as he did to *Daniel*. Doubtless, a lost Sinners recovery is by a Divine Power, by the finger of God, as our Saviours calls the Spirit. You may as well thrust Christ out of the Work of Redemption, as the Spirit out of the work of Conversion. So that as Christ said in the one, *I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with me.* So may we say; yea, so saith the Scripture in the other. *The spirit convinceth of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment*; the Spirit alone.

As Christ in his birth, as the Son of man, was conceived by the Holy Ghost; so a sinner in his New-birth, is conceived of the Holy Ghost: and he is therefore said to be *begotten of God*, and *born of God*: and the Grace that is infused in his Conversion, is called, *The seed of God.* Men.

Matth. 1. 20.

1 John 3. 9.

Men are too close Prisoners to sin, to release themselves: *The Scripture hath concluded all under sin.* That is, the Law hath concluded all men under sin; hath clapt them up close Prisoners under Sin, and they can never get out, but upon the terms of Mercy, and in the way of Free-grace. *The Sinner never gets his Liberty but by the Spirit. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.*

Gal. 3. 22.
 συνήλκεισθ.
 Rom. 11. 32.
 2 Cor. 3. 17.

Every natural man is close Prisoner to Satan, as well as to Sin. *He leads them captive at his will.* And none but the Spirit of Christ can release a man in this case, as he did the Woman, whom Satan had bound with an infirmity eighteen years. Tho Satan be the strong man armed yet the Spirit is stronger than he. Christ binds Satan, and delivers an humbled Sinner under the Spirit of Bondage, into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Christ doth not only deliver from the guilt of sin, by his merit; but also from the Power of sin, by his Spirit. *The Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the Law of sin and death.*

Luke 13. 11.
 Luke 11. 21.
 Rev. 20.
 Rom. 8. 21.

The father hath committed all judgment to the Son. It is in Christs Power to dispose of the Conversion of Sinners; *The Spirit quickens whom he will*

Rom. 8. 2.
 John 5. 22.
 John 5. 21.

There is a Generation of men that cry, Divide the work of a sinners Conversion between God and man; as the Harlot cryed, *Divide the living child.* But what saith the Scripture? *Not of the will of man, but of God, is man born again.* The Spirit hath the power of renewing and sanctifying sinners: *Elected according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.* As when Paul fell upon Eutimus, he came to himself; and the Widows son, when the Prophet lay upon him. It is true, the Act of Conversion is ours, but the Power is Gods. As the Ax cuts the Wood, but the Power with which it doth it, is the mans that useth it. There is no less power required to the Being of the new Creature, than the old; and there was no power less than Gods in that. *Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God.* Man by nature, is a proud Creature; he would be as God: He thinks he can, and will do much in his Conversion, and Obedience to God: As we see in those Jews, who said to Moses, *Go thou near, and hear all that the*

1 Kings 3.
 John 1. 13.
 1 Pet. 1. 2.
 Acts 20. 10.
 1 Kings 17.
 Heb. 11. 3.
 Gen. 3.
 Deut. 5. 27.

the Lord our God shall say, and speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee, and we will hear it, and do it. But what saith God? in the 29.v. Oh that there were such an heart in them! or, who will give them such an heart? The truth is, man neither can of himself, nor will of himself, turn to God. If he would, he cannot of himself. Turn thou me, and I shall be turned. And if he could, he would not; They will not frame their doings to turn to the Lord. No man is of himself willing to part with corrupt nature for Grace. God is long, oftentimes, in subduing a Sinners heart, before he takes it; as David was, before he could take the strong Fort of the Jebusites.

Jer. 31. 18.

Hof. 5. 4.

2 Sam. 5.

And let not men think their case the worse, because the Power of their Conversion is in Gods hands; for it is better so, than if it were in their own: For if it were in their own, What assurance have they of their wills? Do you think that mans will is more to be confided in now, in a state of sin, than it was in a state of innocency? You cannot imagine it.

When man had Power in his own hand, his Will undid him. This is much more every mans case now in a state of sin.

Quest. What then shall the natural man do?

Ans. He must observe Gods Invitations in the Scriptures, and believe them to be real, because he swears to them, *As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way, and live.* And observe Gods Convictions in thy Conscience, and these will shew thee, that thou art a sinner, a lost sinner, an impotent sinner, and yet a recoverable sinner. And now go to the Pool of *Bethesda*, wait on the ordinances of God; wait, I say, for the Angels troubling of the Waters, for the Spirits breathing. He that moved upon the face of the deep, will happily move upon that Embrio of Repentance and Conversion that is in thee. And bewail to Jesus Christ thy impotency to go into the Pool, and see if he do not as much for thee, as he did for that man, that had been Diseased thirty eight years; cure thee with a word of his mouth. And so much in Answer to this Question, by the way.

Ez. 33. 11.

John. 5. 1.

Gen. 1.

John 5. 8.

C H A P. II.

Sheweth that ungodly men are in some sort distracted, or besides themselves. Particularly, from the first clause of the 17 Verse.

And when he came to himself ———

HE came to himself, as a man that hath been Drunk, or Mad, or in a swoond, or possessed of the Devil. Divines make Allusions to all these.

Now his coming to himself, is the first point of his return to God. So the Greek word for Repentance, *μετάνοια*, signifies a change of the mind, a mans returning to his right mind. The Prodigal first returns to himself, and then to God.

Now the Observations from these words, are two.

Doct. 1. That every man in a natural state, is besides himself.

Doct. 2. That a natural man must come to himself, before he can come to God.

First, That every man in his natural estate is besides himself.

This Prodigal is the representative of all such men.

Natural men are not only out of their way, but out of their wits; they are departed from themselves and their reason, as well as from God. And therefore the Scriptures familiarly call sinners fools, *Psal. 107. 17. Fools, because of their transgressions and iniquities, are afflicted.* In the Hebrew it is, They do afflict themselves, *Sin against their own souls.*

Num. 16. 32

God made man upright, a holy and a rational creature; but he hath intangled himself with his own fancies. A natural man is a man of strange fancies; his mind, like that of a Poet, is full of fictions; he acts not by right reason, but by his Fancy, his Will, and his Lusts.

This

This Prodigal Son was in a far Country, far from himself, as well as from God: he acted not after his natural light, but after his Lust; as the Man and Woman did, when they hearkend to the Serpent rather than to God.

Gen. 3. Natural men are a sort of Lunatics: so Jesus Christ speaks of his Crucifiers, *They know not what they do.* We say of mad men, *They know not what they do.*

And as mad Mens actions are in our eyes, so are the actions of wicked men in Gods; he looks on them as besides themselves, distracted men. *David* did but *sain* himself mad, but wicked men are really mad, in the Scriptures esteem. *David* speaks of wicked sinners; that were *mad against him*, they carried themselves as void of all reason. And *Paul* said of himself, when a Pharisee, that he was *mad in persecuting the Saints.* And it is said of the Nations which drunk of *Babylons* Wine, that *they were mad.* And the spiritual man, that is, one that pretended to the spirit in vending of his own fictions, is by *Hosea* said to be *mad.* And the Preacher saith, *That madness is in the hearts of the sons of men whilst they live:* They are mad after their Lusts, the Lusts of the Flesh, or the Lusts of the Eye, or the Pride of Life. Thus we find *Balsam* was mad after honour and preferment, and silver and gold; therefore it is said, the Lord made the *Ass forbid the madness of the Prophet:* He was more irrational than the Ass.

Now besides these express Scriptures for the proof of the points, there are many scriptural illustrations of it; that do proclaim Natural and wicked men to be besides themselves.

As first, They are frequently likened to irrational Creatures; to Bulls, Wolves, Foxes, Dogs, Swine. Beware of dogs. *Cast not pearls before swine. Go tell that fox,* saith Christ of *Herod*; and to his Apostles, *Behold I send you forth, as sheep amongst wolves.* *Many bulls have compassed me about,* saith the Psalmist, And *man that is in honour and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish.* God compared the Jews, to a wild ass used to the wilderness. Yea, natural men are likened to the most hurtful and poisonous Creatures. *The poyson of asps is under their lips,* and they are like the deaf adder, who stoppeth his ears, and will not hearken to the voice of the charmer, charming

Phil. 3. 2.
Matth. 7. 6.
Luke 13. 32.
Mat. 10. 16.
Psal. 22. 12.
Psal. 49. 20.
Jer. 2. 24.

Psal. 58. 4.
Rom. 8. 13.

charming never so wisely. Natural men are ἀπειθεῖς, imperishable creatures; *non persuadebis eis nisi per suaseris.* Tit. 16.

Though a man speak never so much reason to them, about their condition towards God, they are not moved, they will contradict reason it self: as the Scribes and Pharisees did all Christs reasons, they still held this conclusion, that they were Abrahams children, and that God was their father, and that they were never in bondage. Yea some wicked men are said to be more irrational then bruits. *The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his masters crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.* My people, that is, by profession and outward calling, and not by inward grace and holiness: *The Stork in the heavens, saith Jeremiah, knoweth her appointed times, and the turtle and the crane, and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord.* John 8. Isa. 1. 3. Jer. 8. 7.

Secondly, The Scriptures speak natural men to be creatures senseless of their dangerous estate; as men in some sicknesses are unsensible of their disease, or of the danger they are in of their lives; how many sick Souls think themselves well, as the Laodiceans did? *Thou sayest thou art rich, and increased in goods, and hast need of nothing, and knowest not, that thou art poor, and miserable, and wretched, and blind, and naked.* How confident were Ahabs false prophets, that they were not deluded? Rev. 3. 17. 1 Kings 22.

Men are naturally φιλαυτοι, self-lovers, so that they hardly believe any ill of themselves; they will rather question the word of God, than their own estate, as man did at first. 2 Tim. 3. 2.

How many poor ignorant creatures think they have as good hearts as any; tho poor souls they are blinded by Satan, and led captive by him at his will; many a hypocrite thanks Gods *he is not as other men.* And the reason is, because they judge themselves by false notes, they estimate their godliness by things that may be in an ungodly man, as Micah did. *Now know I that the Lord will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my Priest.* Alas, outward priviledges, and common grace, save no man. Paul threw away all these, and fled to Christs righteousness for his justification before God, and the satisfaction of his own conscience. And in a word, the heart of natural men is so deceitful, that it familiarly cheats them. It hides the

the evils that are in it, as *Rachel* did her Fathers gods.

Thirdly, Natural men are unreasonable creatures in their manner of sinning. For,

Rom. 1. 32. 1. They ordinarily sin against knowledge, against the light of nature, against the light of reason: as the Apostle expresseth it, *Who knowing the judgment of God, that they that commit such things are worthy of death; not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.* Tho they know the word and law of God is against such things, and that hell and damnation is the reward of them; yet they will do such things, and approve and applaud those that do them: their minds, and judgments, and reasons are debauched, they change themselves into the very nature of beasts, have the hearts of beasts, as *Nebuchadnezzar* had;

Dan. 4. 2. As natural men sin knowingly, so they sin willingly and presumptuously, in defiance of the law of God; both his commands, and his threatenings; as the man that broke the Sabbath, he did it presumptuously, with a high hand; so do wicked men commit most of their sins. As for the word of the Lord that thou hast spoken to us in the name of the Lord, we will not hear it. I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my own heart, to add drunkenness to thirst. And,

Eph. 4. 19. 3 They sin with greediness. *Who being past feeling, have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. They ran greedily after the error of Balaam.* Yea they sin many times desperately and Atheistically. *There is no hope, no, but we have loved strangers, and after them we will go.* Jer. 2. 25. *Let us eat and drink, for to morrow we shall die.* Isaiah 22. 13.

Ecclesi. 2. 2. *Fourthly*, The Holy Ghost calls their pleasures and delights here, as they use them, meer madness; and so the Preacher found they were by experience: they are often accompanied with sorrow, and they always end in it. *Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness.* Belshazzars trembling seized him in the midst of his Jollity. And saith the Lord by the Prophet, *Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, and compass your selves about with the sparks thereof; this shall ye have at my hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow.*

Fifthly,

Fifthly, Natural men want Wisdom to consider their latter end : *O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end.* They have not that wisdom and understanding to look before them ; they look at present things, as irrational creatures do : *They see not afar off ;* Death, and Judgment, Heaven and Hell ; these are out of their sight, and out of their mind. Many carnal men live as if they held the Soul to be mortal, as the *Epicurian* Philosophers did, and as our present Atheists do ; that when men die, there is an end of them. They think of man, as of beasts, *That which befalleth the sons of men, befalleth beasts, even one thing befalleth them : as the one dieth so dieth, the other ; yea, they have all one breath : so that a man hath no prebeminence above a beast.* And tho all natural men are not of this belief, as to mens Souls ; yet most live after the rate of such a belief. Deut. 32. 29. 2 Pet. 1. 9. Eccles. 3. 19.

Sixthly, The Scriptures prove natural men to be besides themselves, in their foolish thoughts and conceits of God ; as if God were but a man like themselves. *Thou thoughtest that I was such a one as thyself.* Or but like those idol gods, *Who are they amongst all the gods of the nations that have delivered their lands out of my hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?* And we read how *Goliath* defied the host of the God of Israel. And saith *David* of wicked men in his days, *He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten, he will never see it.* And in *Psal. 94. 5, 7.* *They break in pieces thy people, O Lord, and afflict thine heritage ; yet they say, the Lord shall not see it, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it.* Men are naturally vain in their imaginations of God, and their foolish hearts are darkned : and so, professing themselves to be wise, they become fools. *Aristotle*, that great Secretary of nature, writes many absurd things concerning God ; as that he works not freely, but by a kind of necessity. So the *Gnostick* Heritecks in the *Apostle Pauls* time, that pretended to extraordinary knowledg in Divine Mysteries, yet were very sots in their reasonings about God, and the things of God. Thus the point is clear, that men in their natural state are besides themselves. Psal. 50. 21. Isaiah 36. 20. 1 Sam. 17. Psal. 10. 11. Rom. 1. 21, 22

Now the ground and reason of this, is the fall of man from his Innocency ; he lost his spiritual understanding and reason in the fall ; it's true his eyes were opened when he had eaten, but it

was only to see what he had done, to his shame and sorrow, as wicked mens eyes shall be opened in hell.

But as to his Divine knowledge of God; and likeness to God, and communion with him, his eyes that were open before he sinned, were now shut and closed; this opening of his eyes, was not a mercy, but a judgment. Only as one of *Jobs* messengers, that were left alive to tell of *Jobs* sad losses, to tell what man had lost by his fall: Man that did once know by experience his likeness to God, and his communion with God, now hath no more knowledge left, than what will leave him without excuse. All men are born blind as to spiritual knowledge: they are but sottish in their thoughts of God. *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. The understandings of this sort of men are darkned, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts. They are more like beasts, than men, as man was first made. They hear and understand not: as a horse hears the sound of the trumpet, but understands not the excellency of the musick. They see and perceive not, may have the literal knowledge of the Scriptures, and yet know nothing of the spiritual sense and power of them. Go tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not.*

All men by nature have the *Spirit of slumber*, as the *Jews* had; they have neither eyes to see, nor ears to hear, nor hearts to understand to this day. *A reprobate mind*, is a judgment upon natural men for abusing the light of Nature: An injudicious mind, a mind void of common Reason; taking evil for good, and good for evil; and with strong delusions to believe lies. For this cause, God shall send them strong delusions to believe a lie: As those that with confidence undertake to shew the *Ass's* tail whereon *Christ* rode into *Jerusalem*, and perform Divine Worship to it, and a thousand such soppe-ries, which many believe to be reallities. And tho many of the *Jesuits* confess their Legends to be lies; yet they tell us, they are meritorious lies, being to promote their Catholick cause.

Obj. But here will come in an Objection from the words of Christ, Luk. 16 8. *The children of this world are wiser in their generations than the children of light.*

Ans. They are wiser in their kind, they are wiser in the things of this World, than the Children of Light are; as wicked men commonly have more of this World than the godly, so they are more dextrous in the things of this World. It suits with them better than the World to come. *Esa* had rather have a mass of Pottage, than the blessing.

But now as to things of another World, natural men are very fools. If they speak of Grace, and Holiness, and Communion with God; they can only say, *Sibboleth*; they cannot speak of these things as having experience of them, and knowing them by proof.

The God of this World *blinds the minds* of the Children of this World, and he makes them wise to do evil. The Children of this World have a sort of devillish wisdom, so had the Magicians of *Egypt*, and the wise men in *Caldea*, and so had *Achitophel*. They are cunning to deceive their own Souls; but in spiritual things the Devil blinds them. *The God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not. They cannot receive the things of the spirit.* Owls and Bats, and Cats, can see better in the Night, than men; but men can see better in the day than these. And so, tho worldly men have more cunning and craft in grasping and managing the World, such as it is, than the people of God generally have; yet they have a thousand times more dexterity and experience in spiritual and heavenly affairs, than the wisest of worldly men have. These men have some sins that are not the Devils sins; as *the lusts of the flesh*, Drunkenness, and Adultery, and Gluttony. And they have some sins that are the Devils sins and lusts: *Ye are of your father the devil, and his lusts ye will do*, and these are Pride, and Envy, and Revenge, and wicked Subtilty, these are his sins, and he teacheth them the men of this World.

And lastly, The Children of light, (so the Saints are called, as the blessed Angels are Angels of light; the Saints are said to be light in the Lord, and to be called out of darkness into marvellous light.) Now, I say, the Children of light have some

James 3. 13.

2 Sam. 16.

2 Cor. 4.

2 Cor. 2. 14.

John 8. 44.

2 Cor. 11.

2 Pet. 2. 9.

some wisdom in the things of this World; but the Children of this World have none in the things of the World to come. And besides, that wisdom that the people of God have in matters of this World, is of a more refined nature than is the wisdom of other men; they have those Promises relating to it, that other men have not: *A good man shall guide his affairs with discretion. God giveth to a man that is good in his sight, wisdom, and knowledge, and joy.* Yet as our Saviour said, the Children of this World are wiser in their Generations than the Children of light; they are usually more subtil and active in earthly things, than the Children of Light are in heavenly things. And the reason is, because the one have nothing within them to hinder them, but the other have a clog. *The flesh lusteth against the spirit.*

Psaln 112. 5.
Eccles. 2. 26.

Gal. 5. 17.

I come now to some Application, and there are many Inferences from this Doctrine.

1. That natural men are strangers to themselves, as well as to God; they come not to themselves, till their Conversion or Damnation. Many a natural mans eyes are not opened to see his own state till after death; as you see in the rich man. They know not that they are *wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked*; they know not what they say, nor what they do, in things of Religion, and the Life to come. Alas, poor Creatures, they know not what they say, when they say, they hope to be saved by the Mercy of God, and the Merits of Christ. Mad Men and Women will talk at a strange rate; they are this, and they have that; they are Princes, and have great inheritance; and so do natural men speak and think.

Luke 16.
Rev. 3. 17.

2. This teacheth us not to marvel at the strange thoughts that carnal men have of Gods people: look upon them as distracted men, and then you will not wonder at what they say, and do against the people of God. They *think it strange, that you run not with them into the same excess of riot.*

1 Peter 4.
Acts 26. 24.
2 Kings 9. 11.
Isaiah 59. 15.

Festus thought Paul besides himself, and the Captains thought the young Prophet to be a mad Fellow: Wherefore came this fellow unto thee? He that departeth from evil, maketh himself a prey: or, is accounted a mad man. Yea, many of the Jews said of Christ, *he hath a devil, and is mad.*

John 10. 20.

The

The World will hate and persecute you ; and *they that kill John 15.*
you, will think that they do God service. I say, wonder not *John 16. 24.*
 at all this, because they are the words and works of a sort of
 Lunatick distracted and possessed People. You would pity
 a distracted Man or Woman, or one possessed of the Devil ;
 So rather pity these Men and Women, for this is their case ;
 and if ever God open their eyes, and change their hearts,
 they will own it, as *Paul* did ; he confessed that he was *mad* *Acts 26. 11.*
 in persecuting the Church. That is observable in the book *Chap. 5.*
 of *Wisdom*, *We fools thought his life madness ; this is he whom*
we sometimes had in derision.

3. The Doctrine serves for Exhortation to those who are
 still in this state of Distraction, To seek to come out of it ; to
 come to themselves, as this lost Son did.

But how shall any know they are not come to themselves ?
 I answer, If you be not come to God, you are not come to
 your selves ; if you be strangers to God, and the Life of
 God, you are certainly strangers to your selves, and to your
 state towards God.

But is a man besides himself, capable of Exhortation and
 Counsel ? Yes, tho he have not the reason of a Believer, yet *2 Thes. 3. 2.*
 he hath the reason of a Man ; and this God makes use of ;
knowing the terror of the Lord we persuade men, saith the Apo- *2 Cor. 5. 11.*
 stle. A convinced Conscience can say, *Men and brethren, what* *Acts 2. 37.*
shall we do ?

Whilst you are strangers to your selves, you will have
 strange thoughts of your selves, and of the people of God,
 and ways of God, and of God himself, till Christ cures you
 of this Lunacy. The learned Philosophers in Christs and the
 Apostles times, counted the Preaching of Christ crucified,
foolishness. It was a Speech of one of them, *It is a foolish*
thing to conceit, that one man shall be saved by anothers Death.
 What is it that makes men wise men, and what is it that makes
 men fools in Gods esteem, and the Scriptures esteem ? It is the
 fear of the Lord that makes men wise : *The fear of the Lord*
is the beginning of wisdom. *Psal. 111.*

And when men walk besides the word, they are fools, and
 beside themselves : *They have rejected the Lord, and what wis-* *Jer 8 9.*
dom is in them ? None : When men walk at random, and not
 by rule, when they do not hedge in their ways by the Scrip-
 ture,

Pfal. 49. 13.
2 Sam. 13.

ture, *This their way is their folly.* Thou shalt be one of the fools in Israel, said Tamar to Amnon. When men fulfil their own Lusts, they are fools in Israel. There is folly in all sin, and wickedness is madness. The best Reason lyeth in true Holiness. It is said of *Logic*, That it is reason refined; but it may be better said so of Godliness; It hath Angelical and Divine Reason in it.

Thus much for the first Doctrine, *That ungodly men are in some sort distracted and besides themselves.*

C H A P. III.

Sheweth, That a natural or ungodly man must come to himself, or his Conscience be thoroughly awaken'd, before he can come to God. From the same Clause of the 17. Verse.

And when he came to himself —

I Come now to the second Doctrine, viz. *That a natural man must come to himself, before he can come to God.*

Isa. 46. 8.

Job 2.
Jer. 2. 36.

Here it is said the Prodigal came to himself; and in the 18.v. he resolved to go to his Father. And in the 20. v. he did so. He came to himself, he returned to his right mind; so the Greek word for repentance signifies, He returned to his heart. Remember this, bring it again to mind, O ye transgressors. The Hebrew word signifies, to heart.

The heart of a natural man is a wandering thing; it is seldom or never at home, it goes up and down compassing the earth, as Satan said of himself. *Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way,* saith the Lord to Judah?

Natural men are strangers at home, great strangers to their spiritual condition; they know not themselves, in reference to God; neither why they are in this world, nor what their state is, as to the world to come.

They dream of these sometimes, as men do of things in their sleep; but they have no experience and proof of them. Actions and imployments in the World, and Countreys are searched into by them, and it may be the Bible too, as a Glass to look with at other things, but not to see them selves and their condition in. *Who so looketh into the perfect law of liberty.* That is, James 1. 25. the Scriptures, but especially the Gospel: *παράνυσας*, that maketh diligent enquiry, as men ought to do. But alas! a natural mans heart, that little corner, is to himself a *Terra Incognita*, an unknown and strange countrey: natural men can give a better account almost of any thing in the World, than of their own hearts, and their estate towards God. Indeed in some respects natural men know themselves too much, and can boast of their Peacock-feathers. *Knowest thou not, saith Pilate to Jesus,* John 19. *that I have power to release thee, or to crucifie thee?* and *Simon* Acts. 8. 9. *Magus* gave out that himself was *some great one*: If they have but a little better blood than other men, a better estate, better parts, and better esteem in the world, this swells them, and puffs them up; as *Pauls* Revelations had done him, if not prevented. But come and ask these men about their hearts, what grace is there, or what sins, or what temptations do assault them most, what their affections and thoughts are imployed most on; pose them in these matters, and they can say little, they can speak little good sense here; or else their answers are absurd, as those of *Nicodemus* were to Christ, about regeneration: or doubtful and ambiguous, like the Heathen Oracles. John 3.

This reflexive knowledge of a mans self, is not in fashion amongst any sort of men except the seriously godly: if it were, men would have more checks and rebukes from themselves; in their carnal walking; but the eye of their mind looks all outward, like the eye of their body. How many men know little of themselves, and their state towards God, whilst they are in the world, and even when they are leaving it? They know not themselves till they are out of this World: as an *Italian* Physician said when dying, *I shall shortly know whether my Soul be immortal.* But now when this Prodigal came to himself, he

D

came

came to be acquainted with himself, and the condition he was in: *How many hired servants of my fathers have bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with hunger?*

And not only acquainted with the badness of his state past and present, but he is upon consideration, how it may be better, and that hopefully, because there was not only bread enough in his Fathers house, but also to spare, as you see by his discourse with himself.

Quest. But how did he come to himself? and wherein is this manifested?

Ans. First in general. The eye of his conscience was opened: for till conscience be awakened, a sinner comes not to a due consideration of himself. And the Devil keeps the eye of conscience in a sinner shut, as long as he can; he knows if conscience have an eye to see sin, it will have a tongue to speak against it. *The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not.*

The conscience of most unconverted sinners are no more sensible of their sinning, than *Lot* was of his daughters lying down and rising up. Observe it in *Judas*, tho *Jesus* told him that he would betray him, and withal pronounced *wo* to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed; yet he bogled not, nor flincht at it till he had done his work. This is the reason that many wicked wretches have no bands in their death; but as it is said in *Job*; *They die wholly at ease and quiet: They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down into the grave.* They die easily, with as little trouble of mind as body. Not that this is every wicked mans case; *Jehoram* died upon the rack; and every wicked mans conscience is opened presently after death, and is upon the rack: *Be sure their sin will find them out*, here, or as soon as ever they come into another world. *Judas* his sin found him out, a little before he went out of this world, tho it stirred not at *Christs* words; *Wo be to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed*; yet after *Christ* was condemned, conscience was awakened out of its dead sleep.

The eye of the mind may be opened, when the eye of conscience is not; a man may be a convinced sinner, and yet not a conscience-troubled sinner. The *Pharisees*, as *Christ* told them,

were

2 Cor. 4.

Gen. 19.

Matt. 26.

Psal. 73. 4.

Ch. 21. 13.
and 23.

2 Chro. 21. 15.

Numb. 32.

were not blind, the eye of their mind was opened, they John 9. sinned against the light; but the eye of conscience was still closed, they sinned against Christ and their conscience, but their conscience did not trouble them for their sins.

But now the eye of the Prodigals conscience was opened when he came to himself, *I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight.*

Quest. But may not a mans conscience be opened, and yet he not come to himself?

Ans. Yes, it was so with Judas; and the prodigals conscience was awakened before, when he was pincht with famine, and still besides himself. All terrors of conscience do not argue a Sinner to be come to himself. A whip may make a mad man roar, and yet not bring him to his right mind. We see this man in the Text, when he was pincht in a far Countrey, he hath not a thought of his return to his fathers house at first, but shifts and shirks for relief; the eye of conscience all this while was but half opened; as a man that may be frightened much in his Dream, yet not be thoroughly awakened, but sleep again.

But now when conscience is awakened indeed, when the eye of conscience is fully opened, not onely for a man to see and feel his sin and misery, but also to see that there is a remedy, and that there is hope of this remedy; now a sinner is come to himself: and thus it was with the sinner in the Text, *When he came to himself, he said, how many hired servants of my fathers have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger? I will arise and go to my father.* So that when a sinner is come to himself, he falls upou serious consideration of his lost state, with a resolution to seek his recovery.

Quest. But when a sinner finds ease from terror of conscience, is this an evidence that he is come to himself, and at peace with God?

Ans. No, God reprieves many a man, that he is not reconciled to; a man may be freed from his present pangs and trouble of conscience, and yet not be a jot further from hell. As a

man that goes upon bail, is not set at liberty, but must appear, and answer at the Law-day; so God may let a sinner meet with thists and present ease from terror of conscience, and yet seal up his sins, and lay them up in store, as he did *Israels*, Deut. 32. 34. *Is not this laid up in store with me, and sealed up amongst my treasures?* his treasures of wrath, Rom. 2. 5. The Lord reprimed the children of *Israel* when he was casting them off, yet it was but till his day of Visitation. *Let me alone, saith he, that I may consume them*; but at *Moses's* request and prayer, reprimed them, *And the Lord repented of the evil that he thought to do unto them.* Yet add afterwards, *nevertheless in the day that I visit, I will visit their sin upon them.* So that a sinner may be reprimed, and not pardoned: many things come in with pardon, that a meer reprimed sinner, a sinner taken only off from the rack of conscience at present, hath not; what these things are, you see *Jer. 31.* There is a new covenant betwixt God and pardoned sinners. God puts his laws into their inward parts, and writes them in their hearts; the wills and minds of both meet. God will carry himself towards them as their God, and they towards him as his people, and have experimental familiarity with him. *I will be their God, and they shall be my people: for I will forgive their iniquities, and remember their sins no more.* Well then, in the first place, this prodigals coming to himself, put him upon consideration, in this 17. *Ver.* Secondly, upon resolution in the 18. and 19. *verses.* And Thirdly, his conversion follows in *ver. 20.* He came to himself by consideration; he came home to his father by conversion.

Due consideration of a mans state, is a preparative to conversion to God. *Let us search and try our ways, and turn to the Lord:* Yea, if a godly man wander from God, his way back is by solemn consideration; we see it in *Dauids* case, *I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy Testimonies.* Consideration is the work of the conscience, which being thoroughly opened, puts a man upon it. The eye of the mind knows many things which it considers not; it is the eye of the conscience by which a sinner considers and debates with himself about his state towards God: and such a conscience is a mercy. Conscience is the eye which looks into the inside of a man, whilst a man hath only the eye of his mind opened, he sees, and hears, and perceives not; it is the eye of conscience that sees things with consideration,

consideration, it makes a man ponder and debate things, and concern himself in them. Conscience is the faculty that makes application, a thing that men are shy of, and put it off as long as they can; as we see in *Felix*, *Go thy way for this time, I will hear thee when I have a convenient season.*

C H A P. IV.

Proceedeth to instance what the conscience of a returning sinner is awakened to consider. From the rest of the 17. Verse.

How many hired servants of my father have bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with hunger?

Quest. **B**UT what was the subject of the Prodigals consideration, when he came to himself?

Ans. Three things. What plenty his Fathers servants had, What want and misery he was in, And the Possibility of relief from his misery. There are variety of glosses upon these expressions, *my fathers hired servants*; and, *bread to spare*. But it seems most likely to me, that the former means the meanest of Gods people, godly men in the lowest condition: and by *bread to spare*, that God hath mercy for more sinners than yet he hath called to mercy.

So that the Prodigal, when he came to himself, and his right mind; First, he apprehended and considered the happy condition of the meanest of Gods children: *How many hired servants of my fathers house have bread enough?* Next, his own sinful and miserable condition; *I perish with hunger*. And lastly, the possibility of finding mercy of God, for his recovery from his lost condition, there is in my Fathers house *bread to spare*.

First,

First, He apprehended and considered the happy state of the meanest of Gods people, *how many hired servants of my father have bread enough?* The Prodigal was now come to himself indeed, when he could so value the meanest condition of Gods people.

There is an admiration of the happy condition of the poorest of Gods people, in repenting sinners. They look not now on conditions by their outward appearance, as *Samuel* did on the Lords anointed; but they weigh conditions in the ballance of the Sanctuary; and say now, as they in Wisdom, *We fools counted his life madness.* But when their eyes were opened, they called themselves the fools and the mad men.

The first appearance of grace in a convinced sinner, makes him wonder at the excellency, of a godly man, be he what he will, as to the lowness of his outward condition. As the convinced heathen, *1 Cor. 14.* fell on his face and confessed that God was in the Church of a truth. Many unconverted sinners are convinced of this: *Thou art a mighty prince amongst us*, say the children of *Heth* to *Abraham*, a man that then had not a foot of the Land of *Canaan*. The Scripture sets such remarks upon them, that when a sinners eye is but opened to have a sight of them, he is struck into amazement: he sees how God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the mighty. The Divine Nature sparkles in them; they have a likeness to God in holiness; God may be seen in them.

The least measure of grace is taking with God; the *some good thing* in *Jeroboams* Son, *Philadelphia's* little strength, *Hekzia's* chattering, *Nathaniels* sincerity. And when a sinners eyes are opened, he sees a glory in the meanest of Saints; as the Disciples did in Jesus Christ his humanity.

There is not the wickedest man in the world, though never so great, but when he begins to turn to God, he admires the happiness of the Saints, as *Balaam* did of *Israel*. *Numb. 24. 5.* *How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy dwellings, O Israel!* And still as more light comes in, they say as *David*, *All my delight is in the Saints.*

There-

Therefore there is no reason for the meanest of Gods people to dislike their condition. They may be tempted to it, as the Psalmist was, and calls himself a beast for it. They are of a Divine Extraction, and have a spiritual right to all things, tho not a civil; *all are yours*, 2 Cor. 3. And they have, or may have a mystical Possession of all things, when they are, as having nothing; which is a satisfying Possession. They have *the true riches*, and are Co-heirs with Christ. Their glory here, is within. How much soever you are outwardly Eclipsed; yet, if indeed you be the hired Servants of God; the meanest of Gods people; if you walk disconsolately, or discontentedly; It may be said to you, as *Jonadab* said to *Amnon*, *Why are you*, being the people of God, *so thin from day to day?*

Psal. 73. 22.

2 Cor. 6.

Luke 16.

Rom. 8.

Psal. 45.

2 Sam. 13.

Quest. But how may it be known that Gods Servants have bread enough, that is, Grace and Comfort enough, when as many a Servant of God thinks and complains he hath little of either? For Grace, you must know, that Gods little Children have Grace sufficient to bring them into that Relation. The Disciples in their weak and raw state, had the root of the matter in them. 2ly. They have Grace enough to keep them from falling from Grace. Enough to deal with Corruption, and with Temptation. And enough to bring them to Glory: *We are kept by the Power of God through Faith unto Salvation.*

John 2. 3, 9.

Jam. 4. 6.

2 Cor. 12. 9.

2 Pet. 1. 5.

But to give a more distinct Answer.

1. It is often in their haste, that they say and think they have so little; as *David*, *Psal. 31. 22. I said in my haste, I am cast out of thy sight*: he confesseth it was in his haste, as when he said, *All men are liars*, the Prophets themselves. *I said, this is my infirmity. Elias was a man subject to like passions with us.* Gods people have strange thoughts of him, as well as themselves, in a temptation: *I remembered God, and was troubled.* There was some evil muttering within at God. Observe *Job*, *If I had called, and he had answered me, yet would I not believe that he had hearkened to my voice*: A strange expression! But of all in this case, *Jonah* is remarkable.

Psal. 116.

Psal. 77. 10.

Jam. 5.

Psal. 77 3.

Chap. 9. 16.]

Jonah 4.

Gen. 28. 2. The meanest of Gods People have that which they know not: as *Jacob* said, *God was in this place, and I knew it not.* The Disciples did not always know *Jesus*, when he was with them; and it was *Mary Magdalens* Case too. *I taught Ephraim to go, taking him by the hand, but he knew not that I healed him.* The Psalmist confessed, that God held him by his right hand, when he had other thoughts of him.

John 20. 3. They have that which they have not, as the Apostle said, *As having nothing, and yet possessing all things*; when they have the least, they may feel the least want. When Christs Disciples thought he was hungry, he told them, *He had meat to eat, that they knew not of.*

2 Cor. 6. 4. Many times those of Gods Family have Provision enough, but have not stomachs to receive it, and digest it. God provides them Comfort, and they cannot take it. *My soul refused to be comforted.* If you feel a want of Grace, or of Peace, find not fault with God, it lieth at your own door. It may be you are not emptied enough of your selves: And, what can a full stomach receive? Were you poor in Spirit, had you room enough, God hath enough for you. You are not straitned in God, but in your selves; the Prophets Oyl ceased not till the Womens Vessels were full.

Psal 77. 2.
2 Cor 6. 12.
2 Kings 4.

This then was the first Subject of the Prodigals Consideration, when his Conscience was opened; he saw a beauty in the Condition of the meanest Servants of God.

Secondly, When the Prodigal came to himself, he saw his own sinful and miserable condition, *and I perish with hunger.* Every repenting sinner passeth this Judgment upon himself. The Grace and Mercy of God will never be sweet to a Sinner, till his own sinful and wretched state be bitter. Thus it was with this lost Son, *I perish with hunger.*

Now his Consideration of his sinful and wretched state, was by Application, *I perish with hunger, and I have sinned*, v. 18. The Sinner in his repentance and return to God, must by an applying-work of Conscience bring sin, and the curse to himself, as a Chyrurgeon layeth a smarting Plaister to the sore for a Cure; whilst a Sinner sees Sin and Wrath in a Parable only, it comes not near himself, as in *Dauids* case; but when the Conscience acts *Nathans* part, *thou art the man*, then *Dauids* heart

heart is prickt. In the Law the Offender was to bring his Sin-offering himself, and lay his hand on it, to shew, he owned his guilt. It is not the bare knowing of Sin, and Wrath to be threatned, that humbles the Sinner; for then there would be more humbled Sinners than there are. But it is a mans applying Sin, and Wrath to himself. All the while *Paul* barely knew the Law, and the curse of it, he had no trouble of Conscience, but was a self-Justiciary; but when Conscience came to Application, and told him, Thou art the man concerned in sin against the Law, and in the Curses the Law pronounces against Sinners: Now saith *Paul*, *Sin revived, and I dyed*. Now *Paul* felt himself a sinner, and under the desert of wrath for sin: And so this Prodigal saw his sinful and miserable estate thorowly, he saw there was but a step between him and Death and Hell; *I perish with hunger, I am even dropping into Hell*. As his Father looked on him as a lost Son, so he looked on himself. Whatever God in his word saith of a sinner in his sinful state, that the repenting Sinner saith of himself: he looks upon himself, as having been an Enemy and a Stranger to God, as well as to himself; he looks on his poor Soul as bordering on Hell. Repenting sinners judg of themselves, as Gods word judgeth; utterly lost in themselves. Sinners must be lost, or else they will be lost; they must perish, or else they will perish. Men are commonly too shy in searching far into their sinful and miserable state, lest they should despair. But the sinner must come to such despair as *Paul* speaks of, *We despaired*——that is, of help in our selves. Thorough humiliation for sin, empties a man of all self-flattery, and self-hope. Yet how many lessen their Sin, because they think the littleness of their sins gives them hope of pardon. But men are quite out in this; for wherefore doth the Scripture aggravate Sin, but to teach the sinner to do the like? Indeed there is a despair, that the greatest Sinners must beware of, and that is, when they greaten sin above the help of Christ, and above Gods Mercy. Aggravate sin, but greaten Christ above it, and Mercy in God above it. You may as well say, there is no God, as no Hope; but yet a sinner must come to a despair in himself; for whilst there is any hope at home, he will never go to Christ, or look out for so much of Christ as he needs. Many a sinner sees a need of

2 Cor. 1. 2.

E. Christ.

Christ, and yet not of all that Christ did to save sinners. Few come to this sense of their sinful state, as to say, *Truly, I see that Christ could have done no less to save me than he did: I see my sinful state needed his state of Humiliation, his Sufferings, his Death, his Resurrection, his Intercession, his Spirit.* This Prodigal saw the far Country, the Citizen, and all other to be vain and helpless; there was no relief but in his Fathers house. Oh do not think that any slight sense and feeling of Sin and Misery, will do repenting-work. And, what if some have overdone, even to despair? Must you therefore undo? What if a man through want of heed or wilfulness, be drowned in a useful Pit of Water? Will you therefore not come near it? Shall not the Jews that were guilty of Christs death, be prickt at heart, because Judas dyed of despair? The deeper you are in godly sorrow for sin, the better; so that you keep an eye on Christ, and his affections towards humbled Sinners, and his Office for them.

The Soul may be lost, by a slighty Humiliation for Sin, as well as by none at all. A man may lose his Soul, by saving it. A Sinner must taste something of Hell, to keep him out of Hell. The Chyrurgeons knife is not to kill, but to lanch and sear the Sore. Where one sinner hath perished with the sight of sin, thousands have been saved by it. Yet no sinner must ever let a sufficiency of Mercy in God to save him, be out of sight. Which leads us to the

Third Consideration of the Prodigal, when he came to himself, he apprehended a possibility of Mercy in God for his recovery, and the repair of his lost condition: How many hired servants of my Fathers have bread enough, and to spare? There is Mercy in God for more Sinners, than have yet obtained Mercy. God hath Grace enough, and to spare. Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. He can abundantly pardon. And Christ is able to save to the utmost of a Sinners need. Paul was a Persecutor, and a Blasphemer, yet obtained mercy; that in the ages to come, God might shew the exceeding riches of his grace. The Apostle speaks of superabundant Grace. The grace of the Lord was exceeding abundant, that pardoned a Persecutor, and a Blasphemer, and the chief of Sinners. God turns back none from Mercy, but proud

Rom. 5.

Isa. 55. 7.

Heb. 7. 25.

2 Tim. 1. 13.

Eph. 2. 7.

2 Tim. 1. 14.

proud Sinners; not *Manassah*, when he was humbled; nor the *Jews* that put Christ to Death, when they were pricked at the heart. Christ put by only the proud Pharisees; the poor humbled Publicans and Harlots he received. There is no cause to give your selves for lost, who are humbled Sinners. Therefore, let no troubled Sinner pore with both eyes on his Sins; but with one look up to the Brazen Serpent. God would not have such a sight of sin in men, as disparageth his free Grace. He can make Scarlet sins white. The *Jews* displeased God, when they cryed, *We shall pine away in our sins*. It's but the pride of a mans heart, or his contemptible thoughts of God, to refuse Mercy. You dishonour God, when you make your sin to lessen his Grace. He hath *set open a fountain for sin, and for uncleanness*. Oh, let the bitterness of Sin make free Grace sweet, and the sweetness of Grace make Sin bitter; these two must be joined. Consideration of a mans sins and misery, and the apprehension of a possibility of mercy; they must not be divided. Consider them alone, and one begets despair, the other presumption; the Devil abuseth both; What God joins together, let not the Devil put asunder; *Jonah* had both these eyes, *I said, I am cast out of thy sight, yet will I look towards thy holy temple*. The single consideration of mercy makes a sinner to turn grace into wantonness, and men are cast away upon the soft sand of mercy, or as bees are drowned in honey; and the single consideration of sin and wrath, swallows up a Sinner with overmuch sorrow. Satan hath a snare here, he would make the Sinner fullen, and shut his eyes against the possibility of Mercy. Thus he brings *Saul* to the Swords point, and *Judas* to the halter. But the danger is more frequently on the other hand.

Zech. 13. 1

Jonah 2. 4

2 Cor. 2.

C H A P. V.

Maketh Application of the foregoing Doctrine.

THIS Doctrine is useful for tryal of your own case, by this of the Prodigals in his coming to himself.

And first, in the point of Consideration, which, as it is a distinguishing point betwixt rational and irrational creatures, for none but men and Angels are capable of it; so the Holy Ghost makes it a differencing point betwixt a godly and ungodly man. For the one sets his heart on his ways: *I considered my ways.* A godly mans great work lieth within doors, *He communes with his own heart,* Psal. 4. 4. He is never less alone, than when he is alone; because he is then frequently either talking with God, or his own heart, about his present or future state.

But carnal men have little or none of this imployment; *They consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness.* There is much Atheism in mens neglecting to consider their state and their ways: It signifies that they live very much without God in the world. *None considereth in his heart to say, I have burnt part of it in the fire, and shall I make the residue of it an abomination?* Wicked men are all upon their Lusts; they are led by them, and to them, without consideration, and much upon trust to their own ways, without consideration either before or after. *No man said, what have I done? Every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battel.*

Sin will never be sin to a man, nor wrath be wrath, nor mercy be mercy, till he come to the most deep and serious consideration of these things. You know how frequently men have the Sun, and Moon, and Stars in their sight, without being affected with the excellency of those creatures, and without noting Gods eternal Power and Godhead in them. And why is it so? For want of considering them as David did,
When

Psal. 119. 59.

Hof. 7. 2.

Eph. 2. 12.
Hsa. 44. 19.

Jer. 8. 6:

When I consider thy heavens, the moon, and stars, what is man Psal. 8.
that thou art mindful of him. — And O Lord our Lord, how
excellent is thy name in all the earth? Consideration wrought
much wonder in his heart at these creatures, and more at man;
but most of God. Men read and hear from Sermon to Sermon,
of the sinfulness of sin, and the terrible ness of the wrath due to
it, even eternal damnation it self: and so of the sweetness and
excellency of grace; of great and precious promises; of the
tender nature of God and of Christ towards self-bemoaning
sinners, and how they are grieved at those who are stubborn and
rebellious, as God was with the childeen of Israel, *Forty*
years long have I been grieved-- and as Jesus Christ was with the *Psal. 95.*
Jews: When he looked on them, he wept, and said, O that thou
hadst known, even thou at least in this thy day. — And yet because *Luk. 19.*
these things are not considered by men, they affect them not;
or if they do, all wears off presently, as breath off
of a new blade. It is an ill sign that a man is not yet come
to himself, in order to his coming to God, if he put not
himself upon the consideration of his estate towards God.
For when men are come to themselves, they cannot but have
serious thoughts both of their present and eternal condi-
tion. Now sin is sin with them, and grace is grace indeed.

A man cannot see his face in running-water, but in standing
water he may: and so, transient thoughts about the things
of Religion, make small impressions, or none on the heart,
but stayed and serious reasonings and consultations do. And
this consideration was prophesied of, to be a great work with
men in the days of the *Messias: In the latter days ye shall con-* *Jer. 23. 20.*
sider it perfectly. Christians, you should make consideration a *Jer. 30. 24.*
great work, fill much of your time with it; that in you may
be fulfilled this Scripture.

2. From the Prodigals considering the happiness of the
meanest of Gods people, when he came to himself: We may
infer, That the ways of God and godliness are the best ways.
Not only the choice of Saints, *I have chosen the way of truth,*
I have chosen thy precepts. But they have a desirableness in them, *Psal. 119.*
in the judgment also of returning sinners. Yea, the people of
God have a witness in the consciences of natural men that their
ways are good, and their state is good, yea the best: *Let me*
die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his. *Numb. 23. 10.*

Sam. 24. 1.

Act. 23.

As Jesus Christ had the witness of the Devils themselves that he was the Son of God. *We know thee who thou art, thou holy one of God.* So doth God make many wicked men his peoples witnesses, that their state is the best, and happiest. *Thou art more righteous than I,* said Saul to David. And so the Pharisees gave Paul an eminent testimony, *We find no evil in this man, but if a Spirit or an Angel have spoken to him, let us not fight against God.*

Isa. 53. 2.
Rom. 11.

God makes ungodly men sometimes to have better thoughts of his people, than his people have of themselves: and many a poor Soul that is but looking towards God, as this Prodigal was, wisheth the state, which some despondent Christians dislike; as is seen in their fears, and doubts, and discontents: And those men that do not see a beauty in the meanest of Gods holy ones, are blind, as the Jews were, *who could see no comeliness in Christ, why they should desire him.*

Now by looking into this glass, a man may give more than a guess at his own estate. This was the first thing this Prodigal was convinced of when he came to himself, he apprehended the happiness of the poorest of Gods people, and that there was a beauty and a desirableness in them, and in their condition. *Make me as one of thy hired servants.*

2 Pet. 1.

Grace is a more excellent thing, than the whole creation bestides; It is something of the Divine nature. As Philosophers say of a bird, or a fly, or a plant, that it is a more excellent creature than the Sun, in respect of its life; it is a living creature; so there is that excellency in grace, that is not in the highest natural or acquired parts, or in the greatest Estate, and Power, and Dignity in the world; grace makes a man more like to God, than all the other do. Yea, whereas parts, and Power, and Riches, and the like, make men exalt themselves above God, or against him; knowledge puffs up, and Power and Greatness hath made many great men think themselves gods, as Pharaoh, the King of Assyria; Nebuchadnezzar; and so Herods great parts made him willing to be called a God. Grace, on the contrary, makes men exalt God, and abase themselves as the Prodigal at his first entrance into the state of grace. *I am not worthy to be called thy Son.*

Acts 12.

3. When the Prodigal came to himself, he considered his own miserable condition: and men should prove themselves by
this

this, whether they are come to themselves. Hath your natural condition, and the days wherein you were in your blood, cost you affecting considerations? Grace is the same in all converts; repentance is not one thing in one man, and another thing in another; grace may be different in degree, but not in essence. There is no man that is come to himself, in order to his coming to God, but he is sensible, what a wretch he is, or hath been; and what a wretched condition he hath been in. There is sense in grace, as well as in Nature; and there is nothing, more abhorring to Nature, than sin is to Grace; *I abhor my self*. Look how loath some a sinner is to God, whilst in his blood; so loathsome he is in his own eyes, when they are opened to see God and himself. A man can never know God mercifully by proof, till he knows himself miserable. The *Israelitiss* had not known the excellent Vertue of the brazen Serpent, had they not felt the stings of the fiery Serpents. It's a sign that Satan still keeps possession, when you can not sigh, and groan under the sense of sin, and wrath for sin. When a man comes to himself; conscience opens its eyes and its mouth too, and gives a man a true report of his wretched estate by nature.

Oh my Brethren, one word of conscience, of an awakened conscience, will do more good to make you feel your sinful and wretched state, than a thousand words from any man. For conscience is within men. It is not the highest bustling wind without the earth, that moves and shakes it; but wind that gets within, is that which makes earthquakes. Oh get a conscience sensible of your sinfulness and misery by nature, and that will be a sign to you, that you are returned, or returning to God, as this man in the text was.

Till a man have an awakened conscience, though never so great a sinner, yet all the thunder of the curses of the law, even damnation it self, is but powder-shot: and tho the cry of such mens sins be so loud as to go up to Heaven; yet they themselves hear it not. Oh the dreadfulnes of a sleepy senseless conscience, it is a certain evidence that a man is not come to himself, and therefore not to God. And yet how many think themselves happy in such a conscience; in a quiet still conscience, that lets them sin, and says nothing? And if conscience awake, and begins to chide; it is as a continual dropping to them, as it is said of the contentions of a wife. They think of such a conscience,

Matt. 8.

ence, as the Devils did of Christ, that it is their torment.

1 Cor. II. 31.

But, my Brethren, an awakened and feeling conscience, is a mercy, and not a judgment; and the conscience give judgment against a mans self, yet it is not a condemning but preventing judgment. *If we would judge our selves, we should not be judged*; when a man hath entered his suit in a lower Court, happily it frees and excuses him from a higher.

Oh, get the sensible feeling of your state; and condition towards God; you may have much appearing Religion in knowledg, and profession; and yet if you have not this sense of feeling, you are not come to your selves; you may have the sense of seeing, and yet not the sense of feeling in things of religion and godliness.

Jer. 2. 19.

2 Pet. 2. 3.

In Nature, the sense of feeling is a surer sign of life, than that of seeing, and so it is in Grace. Grace lies most in the feeling part of the Soul. Feeling the bitter of sin, and the sweet of Grace. *It is an evil and bitter thing that thou hast forsaken the Lord. If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.* Many learned men, and men of great Light and Knowledg in Religion, are but as glass Windows, to give light unto others; but want the work of Religion on the affectionate part, for their own benefit.

Grace indeed begins in the mind, but stays not there, but goeth into the affections, and drenches into the heart, as the oyntment on *Arons* Head ran down to his Beard, and to the Skirts of his Garment: There is its principal, tho not its only work. A child hath as much feeling as a man, tho not so much reason: and so a new convert hath as exquisite sence of the evil of sin, and misery of a sinful state, as the oldest Saint, tho he have not so much experience.

Quest. But how far is the sence of a mans sinful and miserable state necessary and a mercy?

Ans. So far as its a help to a sinners Faith, and Repentance; but not further.

1. So far as it discovers a necessity of Christ, and drives the Sinner to him. The Apostle saith, *That Christ is the end of the Law.* Whilst a Sinner is under the Terrors and Bondage of the Law, he is not at the end of his work, or Gods work on him. No, Christ is the end of the Law; the Law is but Gods Officer, to lead Sinners to Christ. *The law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.* As the Law convinceth men of Sin and Wrath, so it teacheth them their use and need of Christ. Gal. 3. 24. Now when the deepest sense of Sin and Wrath, even a taste of Hell, of those Powers of the World to come, shall discover to a man his need of Christ, and drive him to Christ, this is a Mercy.

2. So far as it is a help to repentance. Sin is not felt enough, till it be felt bitter. *It is an evil and bitter thing that ye have forsaken the Lord.* Sin and Wrath is not sufficiently felt, till they put the Sinner to cry out, as the ravished Damsel did in the Law; till the Sinner fall into self-bemoaning, as Ephraim did, *I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself.* It's easie to say, there is such a thing as Sin, and to call our selves Sinners; but it's not so easie to feel our selves such. Sin deceives every man, till he come to himself; he makes nothing of it. Sin and Satan appear not in their own colours; they both transform themselves, Satan into an Angel of Light, Sin into something that may seem Grace. Paul bid men take heed of the *deceitfulness of sin*, from his own experience. *Sin deceived me*, saith Paul, that is, in his natural state; and when he came to himself, he found it had been so: Sin carried it so cunningly, that whilst Paul was in his natural state, he thought well of himself. *I was alive without the Law.* But when he came to himself, and the command came into his heart, and so into his Conscience, then *sin revived*, and he died; then he cryed out of the cheat that Sin had put upon him. *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.* So that sin is not felt enough, till it be felt to be bitter. And it's felt amiss too, if the Sinner be not driven to Christ by its bitterness. The sense of feeling in things of Religion, is that which discovers the state of men, whether they be come to themselves, and to God, or not.

4ly, The Prodigal when he came to himself, apprehended and considered the possibility of Mercy and Relief in his Fathers house, because there was *bread to spare*. And let convinced and humbled sinners lay hold on this, else Satan will make an advantage of a sinners sense of Sin and Wrath. Sense of sin, and apprehension of Mercy, make up the complexion of a sinners Conversion: as all colours are laid in black and white. Godly sorrow riseth from the sense of Mercy, as well as from the sense of sin. *We have trespassed against our God—Yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing;* and then they fall to Humiliation for their Sin. The most kindly sorrow for sin, is after the remission of it; and there is no kindly sorrow for sin, but where there is hope of pardon. Therefore in all extremities of Conscience, let this be your plank by which to get safe to Land.

Hope of Mercy from God, is the Lanthorn that he sets out to Sea-beaten Consciences. It's true, the Childrens bread must not be snatched by Dogs. Men may make the hopes of Mercy poyson to them; and so they do, if they turn the Grace of God into wantonness. But the Prodigal made it like the little oyl in the bottom of the Cuse, to revive his fainting spirits.

Beloved, The Name of God is thick set with encouragements to sensible Soul-afflicted Sinners, and his Promises to such are many. *Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden—* And, *he that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out. You have played the harlot with many lovers, yet return unto me, saith the Lord.* And examples in the case are thick in Scripture, as Stars in the Firmament, *Manasseh, Mary Magdalen, the Woman of Samaria, and Paul.* If these obtained Mercy, Why not I? may the returning sinner safely say.

The apprehension of Mercy melted the Prodigal. It's easier to break a Stone upon a Pillow, than on the Ground. As the Law condemns all sin, so the Gospel pardons all that are pardonable, and those are all but one, the sin against the Holy Ghost; which may be committed under the Gospel, tho it was not under the Law, for ought we read, because there was not Light enough then, to sin this sin by. So that if thousands, and ten thousands of sinners have not their sins pardoned, it's

not

Eze. 10. 2.

Ezek. 16. 63.

Acts 27.

Exod. 34. 6.

Matth. 11. 28

John 6. 37.

Jer. 3. 1.

not long of Gods Mercy, but the want of Repentance for Sin, and Faith in Jesus Christ. Christ cast out a Legion of Devils, as well as one. The Sea can drown an Ox, as easily as a Fly.

Adams sin, the greatest of all sins, because it had the guilt of all in it, and the spring of all in it, yet found Mercy and Pardon. The greater the Disease, the more honour to the Physician is the Cure; the Chyrurgeon brags not of pulling out a tooth so much, as setting and healing a broken Bone. The Blood of Christ pardoned, and healed them that sinned it. Acts 2.

But still remember, that sense of Sin and Wrath, and hope of Mercy, must help one another; men must be humbled for sin, for Christs sake; and this sorrow for sin, will never sing to Death. Take heed of making sorrow for sin, your Christ, that is, to make your Peace with God. If you could weep as much for sin, as all the sinners in the World together; yet that could not make your Peace with God. This is Christs Office; he is *our peacemaker*. Yet Christ comes not honourably into the Soul, but by sorrow for sin. It's the *bruised reed* that Christ will not *break*, and the *smoking flax* that he will not *quench*. He is a Physician to sick Souls. Godly sorrow will never cast a sinner into despair: It's the setting of the Wrath of God by the Law, upon the Conscience, without an eye to the Gospel, that doth this. Many a sinner is broken with sin, and yet hardens himself against Mercy offered: and it is to be feared, it is so, because he may not have it in a way of Merit. The pride of mans heart is such, that he is hardly brought to receive a free pardon of sin, but would make God a recompence with his sorrow. Iron may be broken, and yet remain hard in pieces; and so a sinner may be broken with the sense of sin and wrath, and yet be hardened against Mercy, so was *Cain*. Again, some men make an Idol of Mercy; and dance about it, as the *Israelites* did about the golden Calf. Oh! take heed of this, God never intended his Mercy for an encouragement to Sin, but to the humbled sinner. Let the sense of Sin, and hope of Mercy, go hand in hand, as they did in this Prodigal. Gen. 4. Exod. 32.

If mercy put a bar to Humiliation for sin, it works not well; and if sense of sin work without an eye to Mercy, it doth the Devils work, and works the Devils end: for he himself in his misery, can have no eye to Mercy. If oil be poured upon a sound

Luke 7.
Gen. 27.
Heb. 12.

leg, it all runs off; but if on a sore, it falls into the sore, and works a Cure. If mercy co-operate in godly sorrow for sin, as it did in *Mary Magdalen*, *Much was forgiven her, and she wept much*, now Mercy works right, and sorrow for sin doth so too. Many will weep that they may be forgiven, as *Esau* did; but the gracious tears are those that come after forgiveness. Most of *Dauids* tears for sin, were shed after he knew he was pardoned.

Quest. How shall a man know that the Apprehension and hope of Mercy in God for him, works as it ought to do?

Prov. 31. 6.

Ans. If the apprehension of Mercy make a man more quiet in sinning, and less sorrowful for sin, Mercy is ill applyed. God will not cast away his Mercy: *Give strong drink to him that is ready to perish, and wine to them that are of heavy hearts*, or bitter in Soul. And so doth God dispose of Mercy to those sinners, that are lost in themselves, and that seek it against sin, as well as against the guilt of it. And as for the degrees of sorrow for sin, we must know, that the Metal is melted enough, when it will run into the Mould: when your sense of sin and sorrow for sin, makes you cast your selves into the Will of God, and makes you say as *Saul*, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* You may conclude it is sufficient. But you must take heed of abating the Fire too soon, lest the heart grow too cold for receiving Gods impressions, which are, to be glad of Mercy, and to walk humbly in the Application of it, as *Paul* did, when he obtained Mercy; reputing himself *the chiefest of sinners, and less than the least of saints*.

2 Tim. 1. 15
Eph. 3. 8.

To close, Let every man examine himself, whether he be come to himself, by these considerations of the Prodigals when he came to himself. These are the surest marks in the way of a mans Conversion to God; he considers the happy condition of the meanest of Gods people; he hath a deep sense of his own wretched state by nature, and he apprehends a possibility of Mercy and recovery in God. And as they are the surest, so they are the most comfortable, because they

do not only accompany conversion, but follow after it, and always are in view. Ye cannot safely build upon your profession in Religion, without these have a being in you. Tho you see great boughs on a Tree, it argues not that it lives; but if you see buds, it doth; your profession of religion is insignificant without these vital buds. Thus much for the 17. Verse.

C H A P. VI.

Sheweth, that in a sinners return to God, consideration produceth Resolution, which is of great use. From the first Clause of the 18. Verse.

I will arise, and go to my Father.

IN the former Verse when the prodigal came to himself, he was upon consideration. He comes next to Resolution.

The conversion of a sinner is gradual. First, he considered, then resolved, then returned. Conversion it self is one instantaneous act; but the preparations to it, are by steps: as the making of a man in the womb is in that instant when the Soul is infused; but the preparation of the matter into which the Soul is infused, is a gradual work.

Now Resolution, is the effect of an experienced and well collected judgment. First he considered, and then resolved. Resolution in matters of Religion, and things of God, should be rational and upon due consideration. The prodigals resolution to go to his Father, was upon consideration, and good advisement with himself.

Sinners should consider things so well, till they see the Ephef. 1. 11. greatest reason for their return to God, and so resolve upon it. Those Lepers resolution to betake themselves to the Host of the *Assyrians*, was upon a rational debate. *If we go into the city, the famine is there, and we shall die; if* 2 Kings 7.

we sit still here, we shall die also; let us fall to the host of the *Assyrians*; if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die. So Religion is not against reason, tho many things therein are above it; as the light of the Sun, is above that of a Candle. Some points in Religion are the objects both of faith and reason; as the immortality of the Soul, it is a Doctrine of faith, and it hath been also proved by great reason amongst Philosophers who had onely the light of nature. Faith doth not extinguish reason, but by snuffing it makes it burn brighter.

These resolutions in the text were of a man come to himself, to his sound mind, and upon serious debate with himself. And this shews the folly of most mens aſtings in, and about Religion and the things of God, that it is without reason; and often against it. How many men step into religious opinions, and persuasions, without any serious consideration? We may see it easily in *Pagans*, *When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkned.* They acted against their light and reason. And we may see this also in *Papists*, and in many sectaries: And this is the reason why many are so unconstant to themselves, in the things of God, that many have returned back from Christianity to Heathenism, and Judaism; and Popery; as the Apostle saith, *Many turned a side to vain janglings.* Hence it is, we have so many *Lots Wives*, that look back after they are come out of *Sodom*. And so many *Demas's* that forsake *Paul*, and embrace this present World. It was upon this account that our Saviour spake that Parable, *Which of you intending to build a tower, sits not down first and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it, begin to mock him.*

Resolution is necessary both in a sinners returning to God, and in his abiding with God when returned.

First in his return. Because,

1. It is that which fortifies and defends the heart and mind against all temptations and discouragements in a mans way to God and godliness; such a man shall have as great discouragements in his going to God, as *Israel* had by the spies, in going to *Canaan*. It may be he shall have relations hang
upon

Rom. I 21.

1 Tim I 6.

Gen 19.

2 Tim. 4.

Luk. 14. 28.

upon him, to dissuade him; and inconveniencies to face him, and doubts and fears to puzzle him; now it is resolution that must break through all.

2. Resolution is needful to avoid those shifts and false refuges that may offer themselves: as the prodigal had many formerly; he had his Portion, a far country, and a citizen to joyn himself to. — But he saw they were but as the cutting of the shoe, to give the toe a little ease, but curd not the corn. When a man besiegeth a strong fort, he cuts off all relief from it: and so when God comes to take a sinners heart, all other relief must be cut off.

The prodigal now saw there was but one door of hope, and that was his return to an abused Father and abused mercy: here he ventures himself upon, *who knows whether the Lord will be gracious to us.* He resolves to resign up himself, *Jona. 3.* to his Fathers mercy, as *Esther* said in going into the King; *Eph. 2.* *will go in, and if I perish, I perish.* This was the way of these *Esther 4. 16.* repenting Jews, *Assur shall not save us, neither will we ride upon horses, nor say any more to the work of our hands, Hos. 14. 3.* *ye are our gods: for with thee the fatherless findeth mercy.* The humble sinner when destitute of all help and relief, findeth mercy in thee.

When sinners are come to themselves, they are humbled out of their shifts, as well as their sins: they say to themselves, as that King to the woman, *If God help thee not, who can?* They think, that God will sooner forgive their sins, than forget his own name and nature. *The Lord, the Lord God merciful.* *2 Kings 6.* The Psalmist said, it was his infirmity to put that question, *Exod. 34. 7.* *Will the Lord be gracious no more?* *Psalm. 77.*

Secondly, Resolution is necessary when a sinner is come to God, that he may abide with him. He will meet with pull-backs, and divers tempting diversions: he may have a dreamer that tells him things that will come to pass, to withdraw him from God. The young Prophet was seduced by the old, with a pretence of revelation. Therefore *David* put on a resolution to abide by the ways of God. *I have sworn, and Psal. 119.* *will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.* And *Jos. 24. 15.* *so did Joshua; as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.* *Psalm. 73.* What temptations had *Asaph* to cast off godliness it self?

You

You therefore who are humbled sinners, and in your way to God, get to this resolution, *I will arise and go to my father.* If you do not, it's likely you will be stopped in the way, and fall short, as *Israel* did of *Canaan*. Resolve, that the scorn you are like to have from neighbours, shall not check you in your way to God. It may be they will say, *Is Saul also amongst the Prophets?* But resolve not to be ashamed of God, or godliness; some may suggest to thee, the many inconveniences thou art like to meet with. But resolve to hold on for all this; as *Luther*, when he began to read the Bible with affection, one of his fellow-Monks said to him, *What is the matter that you read this book so much? have we not the sum of all this in the Fathers?* But he went on in his reading; and it was to purpose. Nay, when thou art on thy way to God, let not thy sins discourage thee, or turn thee back. God encourageth sensible sinners, tho' the greatest: *Yet return unto me, saith the Lord.* And you that are come to God, resolve to abide with him. Resolution is one of the excellencies of Gods People, as to their wills and resolutions they are in Heaven already. To will is present with me; their wills are to be as free from sin, as they shall be in glory. So that there is something of a state of glory in their resolutions against all sin, and their inclinations to be perfect in grace.

I will arise and go to my Father. But did his will prevent his Fathers? No, a sinners will prevents not Gods: *I am found of them that sought me not. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you:* Christ was sent to seek and to save them that were lost: when the prodigals Father saw him a great way off, he ran to meet him. The conversion of a relapsed Saint, begins not at himself, but God: when *Peter* was fallen, he rose not again, till Jesus looked on him. The Lord turned and looked on *Peter*; and then *Peter* remembered his words, and went out, and wept bitterly. Much more then, doth the conversion of a sinner begin from God.

C H A P. VII.

Sheweth, That repenting sinners have encouragement to come to God. Are weary of their distance from him, and have leave now to call him Father. From the same Clause of the 18. Verse.

I will arise, and go to my Father.

I Come now to speak to the Particulars; wherein this Prodigals Resolution doth consist.

And, *First*, we have the matter of it, which was to make his Address to his Father. *I will arise, and go to my Father.*

Secondly, The manner of his Address, set forth in two principal points. *First*, In the humble Confession of his Sin, with aggravation and self-abasement: *I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.* *Secondly*, In his modest suit and desire; *Make me as one of thy hired servants.*

1. The matter of his Resolution, To make an humble Address to his Father: *I will arise, and go to my father.*

The word (arise) is used in Scripture, sometimes by way of encouragement. *Arise, walk through the land, for I will give it unto thee.* Gen 13. 17. The Prodigal apprehended encouragement to return to his abused and provoked Father. *I will arise.*

Doct. *A returning sinner hath encouragement to come to God.* He is invited to it again, and again. God makes open Proclamation about it, *Go and proclaim these words towards the north, (where they were captives) and say, return thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord.* And God hath answered all the sinners objections. *Tho thou hast played the harlot with many lovers, yet return to me, saith the Lord. Tho your sins were as scarlet;*

- Isa. 55. scarlet; Let the sinner return, and our God will have mercy, and will abundantly pardon; for my thoughts are not as your thoughts. And to put the returning sinner above all doubts, the Lord takes his Oath, that he is well pleased with his return, and that he shall be welcome, and that if he do not return, it rests at his own door. *As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?* And it was Christs first and last work, to promote a sinners Repentance and Return to God. It was his first Doctrine; *Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand.* And one of his last charges to his Disciples, when he was to leave this World, *That repentance and remission of sins should be preached amongst all nations.*
- Ezek. 33. 11. *I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?*
- Matth. 4. *Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand.*
- Luke 24. 47. *That repentance and remission of sins should be preached amongst all nations.*

And it's a Priviledg, as well as a Duty, to return to God. Gods Invitations and Commands, makes it a Duty; and the possibility of it, makes it a Priviledg. Sinning Angels have none of these things; the Scripture gives not a word of encouragement to them: as it's said of *Eſau*, in respect of his Fathers giving the blessing to *Jacob*, *He found no place for repentance, tho he sought it with tears.* So fallen Angels have no place left for their repentance.

The Law allows no place for repentance to a sinner; it calls for satisfaction, and that's all. But there is a Gospel provided for lost sinners. *A word of reconciliation*, which the Devils have not; they were, and are under a law which they brake; but they have no Gospel, no word of Reconciliation preached unto them, but unto us there is. So that there is no reason for a sinners despair; the Gospel hath provided Mercy enough for a returning sinner, and full satisfaction to Divine Justice, in the Sufferings of Christ. The Devils work is to discourage a poor sinner, to have him swallowed up of sorrow: but the Scripture gives him encouragement.

2 Cor. 5. *A word of reconciliation, which the Devils have not; they were, and are under a law which they brake; but they have no Gospel, no word of Reconciliation preached unto them, but unto us there is.*

2 Cor. 2. *So that there is no reason for a sinners despair; the Gospel hath provided Mercy enough for a returning sinner, and full satisfaction to Divine Justice, in the Sufferings of Christ.*

The Conversion and Salvation of sinners, is a great Mystery; the greatest sinners are saved. The Gospel abhorreth despair. Despair is through the pride of the sinner. As the Devil is a despairing creature, so he is a proud creature. The best have need of Grace and Mercy: *By grace I am what I am;* and the worst may have Grace, if they refuse it not.

1 Cor. 15. *By grace I am what I am;*

Rom. 5. 20. *and the worst may have Grace, if they refuse it not.*

I will arise, and go to my father. This implies he was now weary of his distance from him.

Doct. *A man is weary of sin, before he comes to Christ.* Matth. 11. 28.

A repenting sinner is weary of his former life, as *Rebecca* Gen. 27. 46. said, as he hath wearied God himself also, in sinning; now Mal. 1. 17. sin is a burden he cannot bear; he feels that by himself, which God charged upon the *Jews*, *Thou hast wearied thy self in the greatness of thy way*, Isa. 57. and *with lies*. On, this Ezek. 24. is a blessed temper of Soul to be weary of a sinful state; for a man to be weary of those sins which he took pleasure in, while in a natural state. To be weary of a disposition to sin, as *Paul* was, and so was this returning Prodigal.

Lord, what wilt thou have me to do, saith *Saul*, when turned to God? I have enough of my own will, now Lord let me do thine: A man that is coming out of his natural state, is ashamed of himself, when he remembers it, and loaths himself. *What fruit had ye then of those things whereof ye are now ashamed?* Rom. 7. Psal. 120. Acts 9. 6.

I will arise, and go to my father. The Prodigal had enough of his far Country, and his Citizen of that Country, and now he wisheth himself with his Father again. Ezek. 36. Rom 6. 21.

Doct. *When a sinner is come to himself, he would come to God.* He is now sensible of the misery of his distance from God.

Wicked and graceless men, like and love to be at a distance from God, to be from under his eye, *to live without God in the world*. But when a Sinner is come to himself, and is upon Eph. 2. 12. his return to God; when he is a convinced, humbled, sensible Sinner; he sees his error, and his distance from God is his greatest trouble. *Absalom* did not so much desire to see *Dauids* face, as this returning Prodigal did to see his Fathers. 2 Sam. 14. Like those repenting *Jews*, *Lord, shew us thy face, and we shall be saved*. Distance from God is the vein of a Saints sorrow. *Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled*. Can any of Psal. 30. 7. you live graciously or comfortably, without the Presence of God one day, or without desiring it? If you can, it's questionable whether you have Grace, or ever had it. The Pre-

sence of God is to the heart, as the nearness of the Sun is to nature; it revives things. There is a fulness of Joy in the presence of God here, as well as in heaven, as far as our capacity can receive it here. The Psalmist speaks those words extream sensibly, *It's good for me to draw nigh to God.* If the Presence of God were not a very desirable thing, why did *Moses* speak thus? *Lord, if thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.*

This shews us, that Grace began to work in the Prodigal, in that he disliked his distance from God, and would be nigh him; he began to speak like *David*, *O, when shall I come and appear in the presence of God?* This will be the Jews great work at their Conversion. *They shall seek the Lord their God, and David their king in the latter days.* Men in their Conversion, become seekers after God. There is another kind of Disposition and Spirit in ungodly and graceless men; they say in their hearts unto God, *depart from us.* Sometimes they say in their hearts, *there is no God, or would there were no God.* And they say in their works, *there is no God.* But these have enough of their distance from God at last: It's now their great sin, and their punishment too, as we see in *Cain*, *Thou hast driven me from thy presence.* And it will be their Sentence of Condemnation at the day of Judgment: *Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity. Go ye cursed.*

It will be their Hell; The greatest part of Hell to the damned, will be a separation from God: *Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord.*

Oh it is an ill sign when men can live without the Presence of God. The Angels always beheld his face, and the Saints would do so; and they are without Grace that would not. Let such know that these words, *Depart from me*, have Fire and Brimstone in them: It was a torment to *Saul*, to be cast out of Gods Presence, and so it was to *Cain*.

I will arise, and go to my Father. Father is the sweetest compellation of God, that a poor Sinner can use for his encouragement. This the returning Jews roled up and down in their mouths as a sweet bit: *Doubtless thou art our father.* And when a poor Soul can come to say, *my Father*; in this the sweetness of the Gospel lieth. *I ascend to my father, and your father*, saith our Lord Jesus Christ.

Quest.

Quest. But can a sinner call God Father before he be converted, and in a state of grace, and in Christ, and before he have the Spirit of Adoption? It is in Christ Jesus that we are the children of God, by faith in him; and it is the Spirit of Adoption that teacheth us to cry, *Abba Father.* Gal. 3. 26. Gal. 4. 6.

Ans. Tho a man cannot know himself to be a child of God, by the Spirit of Adoption, before conversion: yet if he be upon it, he may know God as a Father, and as having a tender disposition towards such as he is, if he be a sensible, self-judging sinner, and weary of his natural state. This was the encouragement that God gave to returning Ephraim, *I am a Father to Israel.* And God manifests this disposition of a Father toward sinners, four ways. Jer. 31. 9.

1. In his long-suffering towards them all the while they refused his offers of mercy: *He suffered their manners forty years. Many a time turned he away his anger from them.* The Lord makes sinners to know him by his name, *Long-suffering.* God had no forbearance towards sinning Angels, but towards thee he hath; had he not, thou mightest have been a Cain on earth, or a damned Wretch in Hell: but God hath waited to be gracious to thee. Act 13. 18. Psal. 78. 38. Exod. 34. 6.

2. God shews a fatherly disposition towards a sinner, in his frequent tenders and offers of grace and mercy. *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. And if the wicked will turn from his sins, all his transgressions that he hath committed shall not be mentioned to him; and, have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die, and not that he should return and live?* Isa 30. 18. Isa 55. 7. Eze. 18. 21.

3. God shews a fatherly disposition, in bewailing and grieving at the obstinacy and frowardness and wilfulness of those sinners that reject his offered mercy. *Forty years long have I been grieved with this generation: And Jesus wept over Jerusalem, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace,* Psa. 95. 10. Luke 19. 41.

4. God shews the disposition of a Father in being greatly affected with sinners that begin to return, that have their mind on it. *I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself, and crying, Turn thou me, and I shall be turned: is Ephraim my dear Son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him, I will surely have mercy on him.*

Jer. 31. 18, 20.

Quest. But are not wicked men the children of the Devil? So Christ called the wicked Jews; *Ye are of your father the Devil.* And are they not the seed of the Serpent?

John 8. 49.
Gen. 3.

Ans. Whilst they are obstinately wicked, they may not call God their Father: God checkt the obstinate Jews for doing of it. *And yet wilt thou not from this time say unto me, My father, tho thou hast done evil things as thou couldest.* But unto the wicked, saith God, *what hast thou to do to take my name into thy mouth, seeing thou hatest instruction?*

Jer. 3. 5.
Psal. 50. 16.

But now for poor sinners that are affected with their sinful state, and desire to return to God, to these God hath a fatherly disposition. Yea more, He is the father of our Lord Jesus Christ in our nature, that he may be the Father of mercies unto such sinners. We see how the father of this Prodigal ran to meet his returning Son, when he saw him a far off. God is naturally inclined to mercy; mercy is natural to him, as light and heat are to the Sun. Yea, these are but qualities in the Sun; but mercy is Gods Essence.

Isa 49. 15.
2 Cor. 1. 3.

There are two things God delights in, about returning sinners; the design of their conversion, and the accomplishment of it. God delights in pardoning sin to humble sinners. *Who is a God-like unto thee, — because he delighteth in mercy.* Davids bowels did not yern more after Absalom, than Gods do after a relenting sinner. So that by this carriage of God towards sinners, especially convinced sinners, and such as are affected with their condition, though peradventure they be not yet thoroughly converted, and in a state of grace, and so have not yet the Spirit of Adoption; yet such sinners have reason to call God father: tho they may be ashamed to call them.

Micha. 7. 18.

themselves Sons, when they consider their former disobedience and base carriage towards him. This Prodigal calls his Father, *Father*; tho he confessed he was not worthy to be called his Son. God is the Father of the Angels; *Jos* 1. 6. and the Father of *Adam*; and is called the father of Spirits, of all mens Souls. And he is as a Father, in tender disposition and inclination towards them; as *Joseph* said, *God hath made me a father to Pharaoh, in saving his land in the years of famine.* So doth God make himself a Father in his disposition to repenting sinners. Luke 3. 38.
Heb. 12. 9.
Gen. 45. 8.

Use. And this may be a comfort to those sinners that are in the way of conversion to a state of grace. Think on the Fatherly affections that are in God towards you, now you have an eye to him, and set your faces towards him; as the Jews did towards *Sion*, with weeping. Remember, that the Mercy-Seat was larger than the Law that had the curses in it; It covered the Ark in which the Law was kept. There is mercy with God to cover all thy sins. *Psalms* 130. 6. *1 John* 2. 2. Jer. 50. 4, 5.

And when thou art come to God, and canst call him thy Father, by the spirit of Adoption; these three things will follow as thy new nature.

1. Imitation. *Ephesians* 5. 1. *Be ye followers of God as dear Children.*

2. Filial obedience, and dutifulness: *1 Pet.* 1. 14. *As obedient children, not fashioning your selves after the former lusts.*

3. Dependance: *Take no thought, no distracting thought; what ye shall eat, — for your heavenly father knows that you have need of these things.* Matth. 6. 30.

C H A P. VIII.

Which sheweth, the deep sense and humility of a repenting sinner in his confession of sin. From the rest of the 18. Verse, and part of the 19th.

Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee; And am no more worthy to be called thy Son.

I have done with the matter of the Prodigals Resolution, which was to make address to his Father.

I come now to the manner of his address, which begins with confession: *Father, I have sinned.* He doth not hide his sin as *Adam*. Nor excuse his sin as *Saul* did, in sparing *Agag*. Nor transfer it to Satan, as *Eve* did to the Serpent, and *Adam* to *Eve*. But chargeth himself, as *David* did in his numbering the people; tho Satan provoked him to it: and God left him in it, as a judgment to the people. Yet saith he, *I have sinned, and I have done wickedly*; and, *these sheep, what have they done?* Here was great ingenuity in this prodigal; *I have sinned against heaven, and before thee.* I have sinned against Heaven, I have preferred a far Countrey, this evil World, before Heaven: as *Esauid* did pottage before the birthright. I have sinned against the goodness of my Father in Heaven; he gave me a goodly portion, and I have mispent it against him. I have sinned against mercy and grace offered me often from Heaven; and against patience and long-suffering, that have been exercised towards me in heaven. So that *the cry of my sins is come up to heaven* as of the sins of *Sodom*. They are as *Abshaloms*, which were in the sight of the Sun.

And before thee. In thy sight, as *David* said in his confession; which signifieth, impudence in sin. *Thou provokedst me to anger to my face*, saith the Lord to the Jews, who sinned as tho he saw not, or regarded not. *Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thy self.* This prodigal confesseth his presumptuous

Gen. 3:

1 Chron 21.
2 Sam. 24. 10.

Gen. 25. 33.

Gen. 18.
2 Sam. 16.

Psal 51.
Ira. 65. 3.
Psal 94. 7.
Psal. 50. 21:

sumptuous sinning, that he sinned to the very Face of God, as a daring Sinner, like him in *Deut. 29. 19* who said, *I shall have peace, tho I walk in the imagination of mine heart.*

And am no more worthy to be called thy son. I deserve no favour at all; thou mayest justly cast me off. *If thou say, I have no pleasure in thee, thou art righteous; because I am before thee in my trespasses, and cannot stand before thee.* I deserve not to have any Favour, or Mercy from Heaven. So that here is observable, Ezra 9. 15.

First, The Prodigals ingenuous Confession of Sin.

Secondly, His Aggravation of his Sins.

Thirdly, His Self-abasing, and Self-judging.

First, His ingenuous Confession of sin. Confession of sin accompanies the Conversion of a Sinner. It is not only his Duty, but his Genius. Sin is a sore that must be opened; else the wound will fester, as it did in *David, Whilst I kept silence, my bones waxed old.* When Satan had tempted *David* to sin, he then gagged his mouth from Confession; put him upon shirking for present ease, rather than upon Confession for pardon. Thus did this Prodigal at first; when first troubled in Conscience, he joyns himself to a Citizen; but now he is got into his right wits and way, he disburdens his Conscience. Humble Confession of sin, is a vomit to the sinners Conscience, which brings up the filthiness of it, that troubled and tormented him. A sinner that comes to God with his heart, comes with sin in his mouth: Oh, I have sinned, *I have done foolishly, and lendly.* Psal. 32. 3.
Psal. 106. 6.

Quest. Is this such a great matter to say, I have sinned? *Pharaoh* said as much, *I have sinned; the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked.* Exod. 9. 27. And *Saul* did so, *I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and thy word.* 1 Sam. 15. And *Judas* did so, *I have sinned, in that I have betrayed Innocent blood.* Matth. 4. 27.

Ans. It's true, these confessed Sin, as well as the Prodigal.

H

But

But first, Not to God; they were too Stout and Proud for this. *Pharoah* confessed Sin to *Moses*, and *Saul* to *Samuel*, and *Judas* to the chief Priests and Elders. It was not modesty that kept them from confessing their Sins to God; but the Pride of their hearts, that they would not abase themselves therein before God as they should. Indeed fear might be in it too, as when *Adam* had sinned, then saith he, *I was afraid, and hid my self*. But there was stoutness also; such as was in those Jews, when they said, *What profit is it, that we have walked mournfully before the Lord?* This, God said, was their stoutness.

Gen. 3. 7.

Mal. 3. 13, 14.

But this repenting Prodigal, goes to God himself, and confesseth his sins, *Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee*: And this was the cut to his heart, that he had rebelled against his Father, a tender Father.

It was a Confession of Sin, with a sense of the evil and baseness of it; and that sin had made him a base wretched Creature. *I am no more worthy to be called thy son*. In his Confession of Sin, he puts himself into the hands of Justice, before he casts himself upon Mercy and Grace.

Jer. 31. 18.

It was the terror and dread of God on their Souls, that made *Pharoah*, and *Saul*, and *Judas*, acknowledg their sins; whereas it was the Apprehension of his ungrateful carriage towards God, his disobedience and vile carriage to his Father, that put this repenting Prodigal upon Confession of Sin. His Confession of Sin, was a heart-affecting Confession, like *Ephraims*. It was a self-bemoaning, and a self-judging Confession. There is much difference betwixt one mans seeing, and feeling, and confessing Sin, and anothers. *Cain* did not see, and feel, and confess his Sin, as his Father *Adam* did after the Promise of Christ. He laid hold on the Promise of Christ when he considered, and confessed his Sin, tho a greater Sin than *Cains* was; but *Cain* did not so, he was desperate in sinning, and desperate afterwards. *Adam*, he said to God as *Moses*, *Lord, this people have sinned a great sin, yet pardon them*. So, Lord, I have sinned a great Sin, a sin that hath brought all the World into Condemnation with my self; yet there is hope of pardon, because of the promised Seed.

Gen. 3. 15.

Exodus 32.

So *Saul* did not see and confess Sin as *David* did, with such sighs, and self-judgings. *Saul* might have greater terrour of Conscience than *David*; and *Cain*, than *Adam*; and *Judas*; than *Peter*; but these had more tenderness of Conscience, such Soul-meltings as *Mary Magdalen* had, she came sorrowing to *Christ*; whereas the rich man went away sorrowful. Those confessed sin as it concerned themselves; these, as it concerned God, and had been done against him. Those had more horror of Conscience for sin; these, more shame and ingenuity. *Cain* was not so ashamed of sin, as *Adam* was, tho he had more horror of Conscience. A man is never ashamed of sin, till he apprehend and consider sin as an injury to God, as well as himself; till he see his sins to be a grief to God, as *Israels* were; *Forty years long have I been grieved with this generation.* This Prodigal knew and confessed, he had been a great grief to his Father, and this made him ashamed to own himself as a Son. This Confession of Sin with shame, is proper to all repenting Sinners, *O God, I am ashamed,* *Ez. 9. 6.* *and blush to lift up my face to thee my God.* So *Daniel,* *O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face.* This is the disposition that God hath said, will be in true Penitents: *That thou mayest be confounded, and never open thy mouth;* that is, in thine own Justification, *because of thy shame.* *Psal. 95.* *Chap. 9.* *Ezek. 16. 6.*

Quest. But is not this too general a Confession of Sin? It's ordinary for wicked men to confess sin in general, and themselves to be Sinners.

Ans. This general Confession had abundance of particulars in it; there was a great deal of matter in a few words. Doubtless, tho this repenting Prodigal had not all his sins in his mouth at once; yet he had them all upon his heart, to bewail them. He that feels what he saith, when he saith as he did here, *I have sinned*; will not exclude any particular sin out of confession. There is a disposition in such a man, to confess all sins, and more than all that are within his own knowledg. As *David* did the sinfulness of his nature, and the sins of his youth; and as this Prodigal did the sins of his Relation: *Father, I have sinned before thee*; and his sins against Mercy and Grace: *I have sinned against Heaven.* And *David* con-

Psal. 19. 12. fessed sins that he knew not secret faults, *O cleanse thou me from secret sins.* Many say and confess to God, that they are sinners; and yet know not, nor feel what it is to sin; they content themselves with an implicit confession of sin, as they do with an implicit Faith. Many that confess their sins in general, forget particulars; as *Nebuchadnezzar* dreamed, but forgot the particulars of his dream. It's said of *Bellarmino*; the great Champion for Auricular Confession, that when on his Death-bed he could not remember any particular sins to confess; at length he thought only on some trivial matters of his Youth; so ignorant was this learned man of his own Heart and Life. It's strange to see how men will be culpable in generals, and innocent in particulars; as those *Jews*, when God had charged them with particular sins of a high nature, as forgetting God, and slighting God; yet they took themselves to be innocent. And so in the 2. and 3. of *Mal.* those *Jews* could not be brought to own their particular sins that God charged them with.

Jer. 2 34.
Ver. 31, 32.

But the Prodigals general Expressions were full of meaning, and there were many particular sins included in them; his leaving his Fathers house, going into a far Country, mispending his portion, trying all shifts before he would have thoughts of returning to his Fathers house.

2 Cor. 2.

God doth not usually set a mans sins before him at his Conversion all together, lest he should be swallowed up of overmuch sorrow, as *Paul* saith of the incestuous person; but he doth it by parcels, as the Sinner may bear them without despair. But still, as God convinceth of any, the Sinner makes Confession of them, a heart-affecting, self-bemoaning, and self-judging Confession, as the Prodigal did here: *Father, I have sinned.* And therefore,

Secondly, He aggravates his Sins in the Confession of them. *Father I have sinned against heaven*; the cry of my sins are come up to Heaven. And there is reason for our aggravating sin, in our Confessions of it.

First, Because of the person we sin against: *Father, I have sinned before thee.* Our sins are against a gracious God, and a patient God; a God that hath made us, and bought us, and re-made us; so that we are his, over and over.

Sin strikes at the very Being of God ; it's contrary to his holy Nature and Laws : It makes the Sinner walk contrary to God. Holiness is Gods Nature, his Name is Holy ; and Sin is the Devils Nature, and makes Sinners like the Devil. *Ye are of your father the devil, and his lusts ye will do.* Isa 57. 15.
John 8. 44.

Again, because of the extensiveness of the guilt of Sin. Men that sin, now, in their sinning may be guilty of all the sins from the beginning of the World, as the Jews were, by Christs charge, when he was here upon Earth : he charged upon that Generation the blood of righteous Abel, and so of all the Prophets till that time ; and this may be a great Aggravation of sin, in our Confession of it. And God himself doth aggravate mens sins, when he speaks of them, even Davids, *I anointed thee king over Israel, and delivered thee from the hand of Saul, &c. Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord ? And so Saul's sin, When thou wast little in thine own eyes, wast thou not made head of the tribes of Israel ?* And by this God teacheth us to aggravate our sins in our Confession of them, as the Prodigal did. Matth. 23.
2 Sam. 12.
1 Sam. 15. 17.

Thirdly, He confesseth his Sins with much self-abasing. *I am no more worthy to be called thy son.* As Abigail said to David, when he offered to take her to Wife, *She bowed herself on her face to the ground. and said, Behold, let thine handmaid be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my Lord.* 1 Sam. 25.

A serious confessing of sin, abaseth man, and exalteth God. Paul in his confession, advanced Gods free and super-abounding Grace, and made himself the vilest of Sinners. When Joshua bad Achab confess his sin, he added, *and give glory to God.* How ? In owning the Justice of God in his punishment, and in glorifying his holiness, in that he cannot endure to look on iniquity. And the true Penitent also glorifies the Mercy of God, who upon sincere confession, will pardon. *1 Job. 1. 9.* And as confession of sin exalts God, so it abases man, A man must abase himself, and lay himself in the dust, as Job did, *Wherefore I abhor my self in dust and ashes,* Job 42. *Behold, I am vile : once have I spoken, but I will not answer ; yea twice, but I will proceed no further.* Jacob abased himself, when he confessed the Mercies of God to him : *O God, I am less than* 1 Tim. 1. 14.
Joshua 7.
Hab. 1.
Job 40.

the least of all the mercy, and all the truth, that thou hast shewed me. And when Israel were come into *Canaan*, they were to own and acknowledg God in it, with laying themselves low. They were to say before the Lord, *An Assyrian, ready to perish, was my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation great, mighty, and populous.* Now much more must men lay themselves low in confessing their Sins. The end of confession of Sin, as to us, is to bring us to a holy shame and confusion of face. *O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face. Then shall ye remember your evil ways, and loath your selves.* There is need of taking man off from conceit of merit, in confession of Sin, as tho pardon and forgiveness was now his due. Whereas, alas, Confession of Sin doth not satisfie the Justice of God. It is *for his name sake*, that he pardons Sinners. And if men have pardon upon confession, it is by verture of promise, and not desert; for we Sin again, after we have confessed our Sins. So that this returning Prodigal did much abase himself, when he confessed his Sins to his Father. He acknowledged he had lost the Priviledg of a Child, both as to Affection and Provision; and if he might be but a Servant, but a hired Servant in his Fathers back-houses, but in the outward Court, but a *Doorkeeper*, as *David* said, he should think it above his desert.

Dan. 9. 8.
Ezek. 20.

Psal. 84. 10.

CH A P. IX.

Giveth the Reasons of a penitent Sinners humble Confession of Sin, with the Application.

WE have seen that the confession of Sin, accompanies the Conversion of a Sinner. That this confession of Sin in converts is with much Aggravation of it, and with much self-abasing. I now come to the Reasons of all three.

First, Why repenting Sinners are Confessors of Sin.

And 1. there is a Spirit within them that constrains them to it, as *Elihu* said, They are full of matter, and the Spirit with-
in

Job 32.

in them constraineth them: they are sick of sin, and their consciences are overcharged with it, they are like a surfeited stomach; a man cannot have ease till he have got up the offending matter. *David* was in great torment of soul, till he confessed his great sin; *Whilst I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day.* It's strange that such a holy man as *David* shou'd be so like *Adam* when he had sinned, as to think to hide his transgression from God; but the temptation, that laid fore-upon him for a season; and whilst it was so, his conscience was upon the rack, as it is set out by the metaphor of his bones waxing old. But when he came to God with a sincere and serious confession of his sin, then he had ease. *I said, I will confess my transgression to the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.* Psal. 32.

2ly. Repenting sinners eyes are opened to see how, in their natural state, they have dishonoured and slighted God. For sin is a slighting of God. In the first sin that ever was acted by man, God was slighted much. His word was rejected. Now converts, in the confession of their sins, give glory to God: as *Joshua* said to *Achan*, *My son, give thou glory to the God of Israel, and make confession of thy sin.* Gen. 3. Jos. 7. 19.

In an ingenuous and sincere confession of sin, a sinner gives glory to many of Gods Attributes. As to his Omniscieny; owning that none of his sins are a secret to him: as *Moses* said, *Psal. 90. 8.* and *David*, *Psal. 51. 4.* Confession of sin is not to inform God, but to humble the sinner before God, in whose sight he sinned all his sins; as the prodigal said, *Father I have sinned before thee; whilst thou hast looked on, to thy very face.* And such confession of sin owns the Justice of God, if he should have damned the sinner: Thus did *David* in his confession: *That thou mayest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.* So *Daniel*, in the confession of his sin, and the sin of his people: *To thee belongeth righteousness, but to us confusion of face.* And it glorifieth his patience, that he hath born and striven with such sinners so long, and not presently condemned and damned them, as well as he did the Angels that sinned. And his mercy and free grace, that hath stopt such a poor sinner in his way to hell. And the holiness of God, that he cannot bear sin, but it's the thing, the onely thing that he hates, *Hab. 1. 13.* Psal. 51. 4. Dan. 9. 7.

Secondly.

Secondly Why do repenting sinners aggravate their sins in the confession of them? *1st.* Because they now feel sin to be out of measure sinful. In their state of sin, sin deceived them; they were under the deceitfulness of sin, which the Apostle speaks of *Heb. 3.* Their lusts were deceitful lusts. Sin had a disguise, and transformed it self into a pleasing shape, as Satan doth. But now their eyes are opened, they see sin in its own colours: they see sin is an ugly thing, and that it turns a man into the shape of a Devil: *one of you is a Devil*, saith Christ. And returning sinners feel sin a heavy thing; now conscience hath its feeling, which it wanted before, when all sin was light. They then chose the greatest sin, before the least affliction: but now, the greatest affliction, is lighter than the least sin. *Paul* could bear any affliction, and called it light; but when he feels the law in his members, warring against the law of his mind; he cries out, *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?* And though Jesus Christ was willing to suffer any sorrow from man, or from God himself, to save sinners: yet he would not have committed one sin, to have saved all the sinners in the world. So that repenting sinners see and feel so much evil in sin, as makes them in the confession of their sins, to aggravate them very much.

2ly. The nature of the particular sins they have lived in, puts them upon aggravating of sin. Now they see how they have *sold* themselves to their lusts to *work wickedness*, as *Ahab* did: and how they have given themselves over to sin with *greediness*. How they have acted over the Devils sin, and done *his* lusts.

Thirdly, The reason why repenting sinners do so much abase themselves in the confession of sin, is, because they have been shameless in sinning; and therefore now they take shame to themselves in repenting. In their state of sin they did like *Absalom*, who defiled his Fathers Concubines in the sight of all Israel? *Were they at all ashamed when they committed abominations*, saith the Lord of Judah? *Nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush.* But when they repented and returned, *They smote upon their thigh, and were ashamed, yea even confounded.* Now they see their filthiness which before

Eph 4 22.

2 Cor. 11 14.

John 6. 70.

Eph. 4. 19.

2 Cor. 4. 17.

Rom. 7. 24.

1 King 21.

Eph. 4. 19.

John 8. 44.

2 Sam. 16.

Jer. 6. 15.

Jer. 31. 19.

fore they did not, as *David* did. Now they look upon *their* Pfal. 51. 2.
righteousness as filthy rags. When the Lord converted *Saul*, Iſa. 64. 6.
He fell on the earth: the Lord humbled him, and he humbled Acts 9.
himself. If they look to point of Merit and Desert, they see
they deserve to lye as low as Hell: *It's the Lord's mercy we are* Lam. 3. 22.
not consumed: and therefore they lay themselves as low as the
Earth, as *Job* did, *Wherefore I abhor my self, and repent in* Job 42.
dust and ashes. And if they look at Mercy, they see they
have obtained that meerly because God will have Mercy
on whom he will have Mercy. They lay themselves low, Gen. 32. 10.
when they remember Mercy: So *Israel* were to confess their Deut. 26.
Mercies with self-abasing, *A Syrian was my father, ready to*
perish. And therefore they must needs be much in self-ab-
asing, when they remember and confess their Sins. And this
shews them, that God is free in his Grace and Mercy to them;
that there is nothing of Merit in their Repentance, and re-
turning to God. For they had been what they were, still in
the state of Sin and Wrath, had not the Lord been merciful
to them, and pulled them out, as the Angel did *Lot* out of
Sodom. Gen. 19. 16.

Use. And let men judg of their Conversion by their confess-
ing of Sin with Aggravation, and self-abasement. This be-
gin with Conversion, and never ceaseth, till a state of Per-
fection. Whilst we are liable to Sin, there must be self-ab-
asing Confession of Sin; whilst the Ship leaks, the Pump must
not stand still. Scripture Saints have been free, and full, and
melting this way; even such a holy man as *Paul*, *I am carnal,*
fold under sin. In me dwells no good thing: When I would do
good, evil is present with me: what I hate, that do I. If you Rom. 7.
think *Paul* speaks here of his unregenerate state, you please the
Papists and the Jesuits well.

It's strange to think how some men have knocked off from
this Duty in late times: Some, through conceit of their per-
fection in this Life; and others, through a fancy that Christ
hath repented for them. For the former, we read of no Saints
in Scripture, who owned their perfection here, no not *Paul*.
Not that I have already attained— And for the other, Christ Phil. 3. 12.
hath indeed satisfied for us, but not repented for us; he un-
dertook that in his own Person; but this he left for us. And
I there-

therefore, when Jesus Christ was ready to ascend, this was the order he gave his Disciples; That Repentance and Remission of Sin should be preached in his Name amongst all Nations. And surely, the holiest of Gods Children want not matter to shame themselves with before the Lord, in their most innocent days, as *Paul* did not. Oa! then believe not thy own heart, that thou art a converted Sinner, unless thou find both disposition and action in confessing of Sin to God, as this returning Prodigal did.

The nature of man is hardly brought to a serious and sincere confession of Sin, he shuns it much. It's said of the *Elephant*, when he goeth into the Water to drink, he muddies the Water with his feet, that he may not see his own deformity; and thus do poor sinners. Wrinkled Faces care not for looking into the Glass. It's true, a formal, and general way of confession of sin, is a common thing; but it is not with that shame and blushing as in *Ezra*. Nor with that self-be-moaning, and self-condemning, as *Ephraims* was. Nor with that Aggravation of Sin, and self-abatement, as the repenting Prodigals was; nor with that sincerity as *Dauids* was, *Psal.* 32. 2.

I might propound many things to you by way of motive. Confession goes before remission in Gods method: *I have sinned*, saith *David*, and the Lord hath put away thy sin, saith *Nathan*. *David* had no peace in his Soul, whilst he suspended the confession of his sin; but when he set about the work, he had good news, and was of good chear, as he was, *Son be of good chear, thy sins are forgiven. I said, I will confess my transgression unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.* Whilst we cover sin, Christ will not; we take his Office out of his hand.

To confess sin seriously and sincerely, is the next degree of happiness to not sinning. By this, you prevent Satan, who is the *accuser of the brethren*; You prevent him from accusing you. It's true he charged *Job* to God; and with more than he could prove, for *Job* proved him a liar. Confession of sin, doubtless, is a very troublesome thing to the Devil; he knows it's a door of hope to a poor sinner.

And again, your charging your selves before God, prevents his charging of you. Sin must be judged in one Court,
or.

or other; in the Court of Conscience, or in the Court of Heaven; by our selves, or by God. God will be true to his Court of Justice, as well as to his Court of Mercy. The Gospel hath provided a surety to satisfy the Law for the sinner; yet the sinner must judge himself; and if he doth so, God will not. *If we would judge our selves, we should not be judged.*

Again, God never takes advantage of a sinners confession of sin, when he doth it with sense and feeling, sorrow and shame, and self-loathing. People commonly say, Confess and be hanged; as *David* said to the *Amalekite*, *Thy own mouth hath testified against thee*--- But God saith, confess and be pardoned: *He that confesseth, and forsakes sin, shall find mercy.* If you be godly, you will endeavour to find out your unknown sins, that you may confess them. So far will you be from covering those you know. 1 Cor. 11. 31.

Again consider, that you cannot conceal any of your sins from God: He saw the *Jews* secret Imageries, *Ezek. 8.* and *Moses* saith, *Thou settest our secret sins in the light of thy countenance.* Even sins of infirmity unconfessed to God, may make them swell to sins of a high nature; and therefore *David* did implicitly confess his unknown sins, *O cleanse thou me from secret sins,* and begs of God to find out those failings in him that he could not himself; that he might confess them, and avoid them. 2 Sam. 1.
And *Elihu* taught *Job* to do this, *Thou knowest I know not, teach thou me.* And in a word, this is the thing that God expects from a repenting Sinner, on whom he will have Mercy. Prov. 28. 13.
turn thou back-sliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon thee; only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God. God looketh on men; and if any say, I have sinned and perverted my way, and it profiteth me not; He will deliver his soul from going down to the pit, and his life shall see the light. God will have a man guilty from his own mouth, and the Sinners conscience is a thousand Witnesses. But yet all Confession of sin fares not so well. *Pharoah*, *Saul*, and *Judas*, confessed their sin, but it was to man, and not to God. True confession of sin, opens a door of hope; but these men either thought God not had enough Mercy for them, as *Cain* did, *Mine iniquity is greater than I can be forgiven;* or else they were proud, and fullen, and would Psal. 90. 8.
Psal. 19. 12.
Job 34.
Jer. 3. 12, 13.
Job 33. 21.
Ezra 10. 2.
Gen 4.

Luke 16.

not ask it, as it is said of the unjust Steward, *I am ashamed to beg*. And their confession was narrow, of one particular act of sin; and forced also, by meer terror of Conscience. Whereas true Confession of sin, is free and full: *I will arise and go to my father, and say, father I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee*. And right confession of sin, begins at the heart; Davids heart smote him, and there saith he, *I have sinned, and done foolishly*. The Heart speaks more in Sighs, and Groans, and Grief, than the Mouth can speak in words. In true confession of sin, *the ax is laid to the root of the tree*, it strikes at the sinfulness of nature, and it strikes at heart-sin. As a man should know the *plague of his own heart*, so he should unlap this sore to God.

2 Sam. 24.

Rom. 8. 26, 27.

Plal. 51.

1 Kings 8. 38

I shall not now enter on the case of confession of sin to men, which is necessary in some cases, as of scandal to the Saints, or to get relief in trouble of Conscience, when it cannot be got without it. As for that place, in *Jam. 5. 16. Confess your faults one to another*. The reason of it was, they were given to contentions and broils amongst themselves, as in *Chap. 4.* and this hindered their praying together, and for one another. Now the Apostle would have them own the mutual wrongs done each to other, that they might be free to this duty of Prayer one for another, in their sicknesses; which it seems, were more than ordinary at that time.

Rom. 7. 24.

Secondly, From the repenting Prodigals Aggravation of his sins in the confession of them, and the reasons why all Sinners do, and must do so; we may give an estimate of our own Spirits. It's an ill sign, when confession of sin goes off with ease, and little a do. Is it a small thing to sin against a great God? Your sin must be aggravated, till you come to make *Pauls* outcry, *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?* Think with your selves, how contrary every one of your sins is to Gods Nature, and Gods Word. Every sin strikes at the very Being of God: It makes some say, *There is no God*, and others wish there were no God; and others to slight God in his word, and in his works; and therefore we cannot hyperbolize in our aggravating of sin, our own sins; tho they may seem less than some other mens. Consider how the Holy Ghost aggravates the sinfulness of our Nature, and how the People

Ezek. 16.

of.

of God aggravated the sinfulness of their righteousnesses; *Matth. 23.*
All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. One sin of yours may make you guilty of ten thousand sins of that kind; as our Saviour charges the *Jews* with the guilt of all the righteous blood that had been shed, from that of *Abels*. When you cannot aggravate sin, think of Christ's sufferings for it; who it was that suffered, the Son of God; and what he suffered, the wrath of God. And this he must have done if there had been but one sinner, and one sin in the world, yet that sin could not have been pardoned, nor that sinner saved, unless Christ had suffered. And think what relation to God, you sin against, and what mercy and grace you sin against; and how much carelessness there is in many of your sins; and how much of your will and affections there are in some of your sins. There are many things that may aggravate your sins in the confession of them, if you will take notice of them; and if you do not aggravate sin your selves, God may take a course so to bring sin home to your consciences, as may teach you to your terror.

Thirdly, For self-abasing in the confession of sin, it becomes a returning sinner: he knows that vileness, and baseness of himself now, which he did not before. How like the Devil he was in his natural state: that he was of the wicked *John 3.*
one, as well as *Cain*; that he was of his father the Devil, and *John 8.*
would do his lusts, as well as the *Jews*: every man, in his state of sin, is a Devil as well as *Judas*. Oh abase your selves when you confess sin, as this sinner did: *Fath. r I have sinned against John 8.*
heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to called thy Son. I am worse than *Esau*, he sold his sonship for hunger and need; but I have given away mine in wantonness, and to please my lusts, as *Adam* did his, for a thing like an Apple. I have made my self a stranger, and an enemy to thee; and so not worthy the name of a Son.

C H A P. X.

Sheweth, that true Penitents are very desirous to be reconciled to God, and that upon any terms. From the last Clause of the 19. Verse.

Make me as one of thy hired Servants.

I have done with the first part of the Prodigals Address, his humble confession of sin.

I come now to his modest request, *Make me as one of thy hired servants.*

Observe, how low he stoops and boweth; he saith not, one of thy servants; but one of thy hired servants. And this was but a mean condition amongst the Jews, they had not the privilege of other servants. A hired servant might not eat of the passover, nor of the holy things; *Levit. 22. 10.* He was willing to be a door-keeper in his Fathers house, as *David* was; yea, to have the base office of the *Gibionites*, to be a Hewer of Wood, and a Drawer of Water for the congregation. He is willing to be *Issachar*, a hireling, as *Leah* called one of her Sons, an Ass couching between two burdens; this would please him better than his drudgery under the Citizen in the far Countrey, that set him to feed swine, and to feed with them. The prodigal would now do, as servants that loved their Masters, and were willing to abide with them; they had their Ears bored with an Awl to their Masters door, as a sign that they would be their servants for ever; all this, this Prodigal was willing to, if so be his father would receive him.

Now there are three Doctrines in these words,

1. *That returning sinners are very desirous to be reconciled to God*

2. *They*

Psalms 10.

Joshua 9.

Genesis 30.

Genesis 49.

Deut. 15. 17.

2. *They would be glad of this upon any terms.*
3. *When men have grace, or are in the way to grace, they have mean and low thoughts of themselves.*

1. *That returning sinners are very desirous to be reconciled to God.* Now this prodigal was come to himself, and going towards his Father, all his care was, to be reconciled to his Father. And this repenting prodigal is the representative of all true converts. *Absolom* was not so earnest to see the Kings face, as a returning sinner is of seeing the face of God.

And indeed this is a sign of a sinners being in the way of conversion, that his desire is to be reconciled to God. *Sauls* terrified conscience cried out only for some ease; *Dauids* 1 Sam. 16. Harp must be sent for, to quiet the evil spirit; but not a word of the favour of God. But *Dauids* troubled conscience looks not for any stupid or charmed peace, but for peace with God, a reception into his favour, who was displeased with him, as he had reason to be; *O cast me not out of thy presence.* And this was still the burden of the Jews in their returning to God. *Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine upon us, and we shall be saved.* And so twice again in the same Psalm. *Absoloms* life did him no good, at least he pretended so, while he might not see the Kings face; but it is really and much more so with sinners, that look towards God; they are in as great trouble as *David*, whilst God hides his face. Psal. 51. 11. Psal. 80. 3. Psal. 30. 7.

Quest. But what is reconciliation to God?

Ans. It is a returning to that state of friendship with God, that man had in the state of innocency. By the fall, man became alienated from God, both as a stranger, and as an enemy. — Man naturally hates God, he could wish he were not, he is not in all his thoughts: and God hates him, as he did *Esau*, *Esau have I hated.* Yea, he hates sin in the elect; tho' he love their persons. It is in conversion, by the infusion of grace, that the enmity of natures betwixt God and man is taken away, and slain, *Eph.* 2. 16. — Col. 1. 20. Rom. 1. 30. Psal. 10. 4. Md. 1. Rom. 11. 28.

The Holy Angels need not this reconciliation, there hath been no breach between God and them: and the Devils shall never have it; Christ took not their nature; but reconciliation with God, is founded in Christ; he is *Emanuel*, God with us; and he brings Gods nature and ours together; *He is our peace*. Neither shall the damned ever have it; all men are offered it here; *as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ stead, be ye reconciled unto God*. But there is no offer of reconciliation by Christ to the damned in Hell. This is that grace and mercy that poor awakened sinners now seek; to whom the light of Gods countenance is *better than corn, and wine*; Yea, *better than life*.

It's true, there was reconciliation with the elect in Gods purpose, from eternity, *God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself*: the world of the Elect, the whole number of the Elect. But this reconciliation is fixed in the conscience of a sinner at his conversion; and this is it that such a sinner longs after.

Quest. How may this reconciliation be known?

Ans. First, It's mutual; we are reconciled to God, as well as he to us: God will have a reflex act from us, upon all his acts of grace to us. His good will to us, begets good will in us to him; as he chose us, so we choose him above all. *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee.*

Secondly, Desire of converse and intercourse with God, is an evidence of reconciliation. Strangeness to God is an ill sign. But acquaintance and converse, signifies well: *Truly our fellowship is with the father, and with his son Jesus Christ*. This reconciliation begets boldness with God; there is no Cherubim with a sword to keep such a poor sinner from God.

Thirdly, When you are reconciled to God, his enemies are yours. *Do I not hate them, O Lord, that hate thee?* Especially sin is now hated, because that sin is Gods great enemy. God hates the Devil, only for sin; and were it not for sin, he would not be the Devil. It is impossible to reconcile a man to sin, who is reconciled to God. The end of Christs reconciling

ling men to God, was to present them holy in his sight, Col. 1. 21, 22. *And you, who were sometimes enemies in your minds, by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled through death, to present you holy.*

Fourthly, The word of reconciliation is precious to them that are reconciled to God: *How beautiful are the feet of those that preach the Gospel of peace?* The Gospel is precious to them; and the ministry of the Gospel is precious to them, because it hath been to them the word of reconciliation.

Fifthly, There will follow a peaceable disposition towards all men. The Gospel alters and changes mens dispositions; It turns Wolves, and Lions, into Sheep, and lambs: *The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the Leopard shall lie down with the Kid.* It's impossible for the Soul to feel pity from, and enjoy peace with God, and not to have a disposition to peace with men. wrought in it. Observe what the Apostle saith, Tit. 3. 3. *Shewing all meekness to all men: for we our selves were sometimes foolish, and disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, hateful, and hating one another: but after that the kindness and Love of God appeared, then the case was altered.* A harsh, surly, and proud disposition towards other men, even sinful men, is a sign we have not felt the sweetness and mildness of Gods nature, in being reconciled to us.

Use. This informs us when a troubled sinner is near his conversion; When he is sensible of his distance from God, and seeks out for reconciliation with him. Terror and horror of conscience for sin, are not infallible forerunners of a sinners conversion; they were in *Cain*, and *Saul*, who yet died unconverted; they never sought to make their peace with God, as this prodigal did.

Oh thou convinced, and humbled, and terrified sinner, find this earnest desire in thy Soul, to be reconciled to God, and to be brought nigh to him, and to be in a state of friendship and acquaintance with him; and be sure thy state is good.

2. Doct. *Repenting and returning sinners are glad of peace with God upon any terms.* If the prodigal might but be re-

ceived by his Father, he would be content to be in the meanest capacity: *Make me as one of thy hired servants.* A returning sinner had rather that God should rule over him, and command him any thing, any service; than that his lusts should rule over him, and Satan rule over him; which they did in his natural and sinful state; as you see in the prodigals slavery to the Citizen. Every convert may say to God, as those self-bewailing Jews did, *Other Lords besides thee, have had dominion over us; but its thy name we would make mention of:* do thou with us what thou wilt, and make us to do what thou wilt. *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*

Act. 9.

Paul endured much hardship after his conversion, as you see in 2 Cor. 11. and yet he valued his state of grace, with all his hardship, and infirmities, above all his peace and privileges, when he was a Pharisee. *What things were gain to me, I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ.* He thought himself a gainer, by losing all his privileges as a Jew, and a Pharisee, for Christ. So a true convert, troubles not himself about his low condition in the world, or his mean parts, if so be he hath grace, and can do God any service.

Phil. 3. 7.

2 Sam. 18.

A convert looks upon grace, to all wordly things, as the people looked upon David: *Thou art worth ten thousand of us,* say they to David. The form of a servant, and poverty, went down well with Christ, that thereby he might bring sinners home to God. And so, when the sinner is coming home to God, it pleaseth him, tho it be with poverty, loss of Friends, estate, any wordly conveniences, or privileges, his reconciliation to God, and the favour of God towards him answers all these; as David said, *One day in thy courts is better than a thousand elsewhere.* He had rather live one day in the presence of God, in the meanest, and most abject condition; than in the most splendid and flourishing condition, at a distance from God: he had rather lye a Lazar at Gods door (an ancient use in the Church,) than to be great in the world, and a stranger to God. *Moses* was well satisfied with the sight of Gods Glory.

Isa. 23. 18.

Psal 84. 11.

Exod. 33.

3. Doct. *When men have grace, or are in the way to a state of grace, they have mean thoughts of themselves. I am no more worthy to be called thy son, make me as one of thy hired servants.* When the *Centurion*, a great Commander, began to believe, he thought himself not worthy that Christ should come under his roof; whereas it may be the Soldiers under him, despised Christ. And when *Paul* was in a state of grace, he conceived of himself *as less than the least of all saints.* He had as high thoughts of himself, when a *Pharisee*, as any man. *I was a live without the law*, saith he. Grace is a self-emptying thing: a man by this, seeth himself, and God too, with other eyes than formerly. *Thou art a gracious God*, said that holy Martyr *Ridly*, *And I am a sink of sin; thou art heaven, and I am hell.* And *John*, who was greater than all the Prophets, yet when he speaks of Christ, he is not worthy to carry or untie his Shoes. It troubled not the Woman of *Canaan* to be called a dog, when she was in the way to Christ. *Truth Lord, but the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their Masters table.*

Matth. 8.

Eph. 3. 8.
Rom. 7.

Matth. 11.
Matth. 3.

Matth. 15.

When God magnifies the riches of grace to a man, then he becomes poor in spirit. His eyes are opened to see his nakedness, as *Adam* and *Eve* were. The prodigal thought himself not worthy of the ground he trod on, when he was a convinced and humbled sinner. Such a man speaks to God, as *Mephibosheth* did to *David*; *What is thy servant, that thou shouldst look upon such a dead dog?* And now a man is also nearer God than he was: as he sees that of his own sinfulness, so he seeth that of Gods holiness, which he never did before: and this maks him still to become the more vile in his own eyes. For the nearer a man comes to God, the more discovery is made to him of his own filthiness; as when the Sun comes into a Room, it discovers the moths that are there. *Wo it me*, saith the Prophet, *I am undone; for I am a man of polluted lips:* How came he to be so vile in his own eyes? *For mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.*

Gen. 3.

2 Sam. 9. 8.

Isaiah 6. 5.

Use. First, This is for the encouragement of convinced and self-abasing sinners: such are nearest the favour of God, when they are judging themselves most unworthy of it; they are nearest grace, when they are most sensible of their vile-

Jam. 4.
Luk. 14.

ness by sin. *He giveth grace unto the humble.* They were the blind and the lame that were brought into the Kings great supper. Then doth God shew a man mercy and grace, when in his own apprehension he least deserves it. The blind and the lame, were the poor *Publicans*; these were they that entered into the Kingdom, when the self-conceited *Jews* and *Pharisees* were shut out.

Eze. 36.

When a man becomes vile in his own eyes, and unworthy of the favour of God, it's a sign he borders at least on a state of grace. For where God promiset^h a new heart, and a new spirit, he there saith, *They shall loath themselves in their own sight for their iniquities.* Grace is of an abasing nature; the greatest humiliation hath there been seen, where there hath been most grace, and men have been nearest to God: *Now mine eyes have seen thee*, saith *Job*: *wherefore I abhor my self in dust and ashes.* And *Abraham* calls himself *dust and ashes*, when the Lord was talking with him; Gods worthies have always esteemed themselves most unworthy. The Devil can tell professors, that he doth as they do; he believes and trembles, he is no drunkard, no adulterer, he fasts and watches. But what said a good man in such a temptation, I pray, and I abase my self, which the Devil cannot do.

Job 42.

Gen. 18.
Gen. 32.

But take heed of proud humility, for such there is. The Apostle speaks of a *Voluntary humility*, humility of mens own coining, and not Gods, as most of the *Papists* is. What a strange expression was that, *I am unworthy that God should damn me.* But there is a wild Rose, and a Garden Rose; there is a legal, and phantastical humility; and there's a self-abasement which grows in the Gospel: one which at best is but forced by a slavish fear of God; the other, from a sense of the riches and freeness of Gods mercy and grace, and a real sense of a mans own unworthiness; as *St. Pauls* was, who conceived himself *less than the least of saints*, because he thought he had been amongst the chief of sinners: and withall considered how superabounding the grace of God had been towards him.

Eph. 3. 8.

1 Tim. 1. 14.

C H A P. XI.

Wherein is shewed, That the good purposes of a returning Sinner, are such as take effect. From the first part of the 20. Verse.

And he arose, and came to his Father.

WE have done with the Prodigals Consideration and Resolution. Now follows his Action, or his Execution of what he had resolv'd upon, *And he arose, and came to his father.* In the 17. Verse, he came to himself, here to his Father; that is, towards his Father; for his Father saw him a far off, and ran, and met him, as it follows. He first considered, then resolv'd, then returned; so that he did what he thought and said.

Doct. That a true Penitent stops not, till he hath brought his Resolution into Action.

It's to be feared that thousands live and die in the former, such as it is, and never come to the latter; or rather in some faint purposes, which never take effect. It's the nature of man to think of doing good, and unthink it again; yea, in some sort, to resolve of doing good, and yet his Resolutions wither, and die, and come to nothing. Pharaoh had his good moods, when he said, *I have sinned, the Lord is righteous.* Exod 9. 27. *and I and my people are wicked,* but he eat his words presently. And Balaam wished well, *Let me die the death of the righteous* ————— but it ended in a with. And Ahab humbled himself; but it was but like the Ice, that is broken over night, and frozen again in the morning; Ahab returned to his former hardness of heart. The Children of Israel had many good purposes and resolutions; but they vanished away, and came not into answerable Actions. *Go thou near, and hear all that the Lord our God shall say, and speak thou unto us* Deut. 5. 27. *all*

all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee, and we will hear it, and do it; but they never did it. And therefore saith the Lord, *They have well said, all that they have spoken; but, O that there were such a heart in them.* And so say they to Joshua, *We will serve the Lord, for he is our God.* And when Joshua told them, *they could not serve the Lord;* say they, *nay, but we will serve the Lord.* But these Resolutions lived no longer than Joshua, and the Elders in his time. The Lord found them but a wordy, flashy People, as we see in that complaint of them: *O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away.* Many, whilst they are hearing a Sermon, or at Prayer, or under an affliction; they are affected, and convinced that they have not done their Duty; and now they will set upon it; and yet, when the Sermon is over, and the sound of it is out of their ears, and Prayer is over, and the Affliction is over; their good thoughts and purposes are over too. Just like wax, that softens whilst it's held to the Candle; but take it away, and it hardens again.

How many poor sinful Creatures, upon some rubs of Conscience, are thinking and purposing to leave this and that lust, and sinful way, and to set upon their Duty; and yet observe them, and let them observe themselves, and there is little performance of any thing that was in their thoughts. Just like a door, that moves this and that way; yet, still hangs upon the hinges, and in the same place. Most mens good purposes, like *Jonah* his gourd, flourish to day, and wither to morrow.

Quest. But how comes this to pass?

Ans. 1. It proceeds from the fickle nature of man. It may be said of mans nature, as to that which is good, as *Jacob* said of *Reuben*, *unstable as water*, light and inconstant; man stood in his innocency but a very little while. God can put no trust in mans nature: as he said, he putteth no trust in his Servants; however some men magnifie the nature of man, even in this point of Conversion we are upon.

2. Because mens good Purposes and Resolutions are but half Purposes, as *Agrippa* was but almost perswaded to be a Christian.

Josh. 24: 18.

Verf. 21, 24
Judg 2.

Hof. 6. 4.

Jonah 4.

Gen. 49. 4.

Job 4.

Acts 26.

Christian. It is so too commonly; mens Conceptions are but weak or false, that come not to the Birth, or else there is not strength to bring forth. Their Purposes and Resolutions for good, are as *Ephraim, half baked*, or as it is said of the *Lao-diceans Neither cold nor hot*. They are as crude and uncooked meat, that turns not to any nourishment. Like sudden and violent motions, which are seldom lasting.

Yea, sometimes men have secret checks in their Purposes and Resolutions for good: as *Augustine* said of himself, that when he prayed against a particular Sin, he had a secret wish that he might keep the sin still.

Use. 1. This may be for a lamentation, that mens lives are spent much in wishes and words; and in such kind of Purposes and Resolutions, the least part of which oftentimes comes not into Action and Performance, as *Moses* said, *We spend our years as a tale that is told*. Have you not had Purposes to pray more, and more vigorously? to look to your ways more narrowly? as *David*, *I said I will take heed to my ways, that I slip not with my tongue*. Have you not had Purposes and Resolutions to take your selves more off from the World, and to role Eternity more in your minds? And yet, how little have your Actions herein amounted to? How have you deceived your selves, by such Purposes? and God, by your Non-performance? If your Purposes and Resolutions are not followed by Performance and Action, they are but as Grass upon the house-tops, which withereth before it groweth up. As *Psalm* 129. 6. *David* said, *Psalm* 32. *I will confess my transgression to the Lord*: So he did it presently, he set upon it without delay. *I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies*; these were twins. What time was there betwixt his thinking and doing what he thought? Why, as it is said of *Jobs* messengers, *Whilst one was speaking, another came*. *David* made no pause, and therefore in the next words saith he, *I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commands*. Alas, how many are often purposing and resolving, and never come to Performance, as it's said of those silly Women which were led captives by creepers into Houses; they are never learning, and never come to the knowledge of the truth. *2 Tim.* 3. 17. Indeed, sometimes God himself may intercept a godly mans purposes

- Chr. 28. 2. purposes of doing good; as it was in *David's* heart to build God an house; but God said unto him, *Thou shalt not build me an house*, but thy Son shall do it. When the case is thus, God takes the will for the deed, and likes the purpose better than the performance. Many a godly man would do more for God, than God will let him; his will is larger than his works; so was *Paul's*. When it came to it, God would not let *Abraham* offer up *Isaac* in Sacrifice, as he had before commanded. Thus *Paul* and *Silas* were hindered by the Spirit, in their purposes to go into *Bithinia*: *the spirit suffered us not*. Either by a voice behind them, as in *Isa. 30. Thine ear shall hear a voice behind thee, saying, this is the way, walk in it*. Or else by a Vision, as he sent them into *Macedonia* by a Vision. And why did the Spirit forbid them to go and preach there? Because the Spirit bloweth where it listeth; not only in the infusion of Grace, but in giving the means of Grace. The Gospel keeps not a settled course as the Sun doth. But as the Lord caused it to rain upon one city, and not upon another; So doth he use the like liberty in his disposing of the Gospel, and the word of Reconciliation: *He sheweth his word unto Jacob, and his statutes to Israel; he hath not done so with any Nation*.
- Acts 16. 9. And sometimes Satan may hinder a good mans good Purposes from being performed. So it was with *Paul*, *We would have come to you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us*. Whether Satan hindered by sickness, as he did *Epaphroditus*; or Imprisonment, as in *Rev. 2. 10.* or by Storm at Sea, or finding him other work, disputing work with the *Stoicks* and *Epicureans*, it is not expressed; but it is expressed that Satan hindered him.
- John 3. 6. Now in this case a mans non-performance of Purposes, is not charged upon him, because it was utterly against his Will and Affections; so *Paul* told the *Romans*, *That he often purposed to come to them, but was let hitherto*. Whether by the Holy Spirit, or the Devil, or how else, he saith not; but it's certain it was no frivolous excuse. It's said, *Ezra 4. 5. That the people of the land hired counsellors to frustrate the purposes of the people of Judah, in building the temple, all the days of Cyrus*.
- Amos 4. But thirdly, The Corruption of Nature, may keep a godly mans good Purposes and Resolutions from being brought to per-
- 1 Thes 2. 18. Chap. 1. 13.
- Phil. 2.

performance; either against his will, as Gal. 5. 17. *The flesh lusteth against the spirit, so that we cannot do the things that we would;* or with his will and liking. For our corrupt Nature is prone to shuffle with God, as *Jacob* did about his Vow, Gen. 35. and *Hezekiah*, in his Resolution upon his recovery. But it cost them dear; more sorrow for their neglect, than it would have done care and pains to have been as good as their word. Isa. 38.

But as for other men, it is ordinary with them to flatter God with good thoughts and good words; as if they would do great matters, and yet will do nothing. And if they do a little, yet they *return again with the dog to the vomit*. The unclean Spirit returns again to the old lodging with more company, and worse than before. Psal. 78:36,37.

Use 2. Let me exhort you therefore, to see that your Resolutions to do good, be more Masculine. Let your purposes be in the Spirit, as *Pauls* was. Look for the influence of the Spirit in them. Be not led by Carnal wisdom, or Carnal ends. Let not your purposes be according to the flesh. Such Purposes as these, will be yea, and nay, according as Circumstances alter with you; but purpose in the Spirit and in heart, sincerely, and vigorously, as *David* did, *I purpose in my heart, that my mouth shall not transgress.* Psal. 17. 3. And *Daniel* purposed, in his heart, *that he would not defile himself with the kings meat.* Dan. 2. 8. There is a sweet harmony betwixt the Hearts and Mouths of the Saints, which there is not in other men: *With the heart man believeth to righteousness, and with the tongue confession is made unto salvation.* Rom. 10.

Secondly, When you purpose and resolve against sin, and upon your duty; let your purposes be emptied of Self-conceit, of all Opinion of Self-sufficiency; otherwise your Purposes and Resolutions will but weaken you the more, as *Peters* did him. Let Purposes of this Nature be ever coupled with Humility, and a sense of Self-insufficiency: *Not that we are sufficient of our selves, to think any thing, as of our selves; all our sufficiency is of God.* Therefore resolve, and take in God in your Resolutions; resolve with diffidence of strength at home, and dependance on strength abroad: *Be strong in the*

Eph. 6.

Psal. 119. 122.
Ver. 106.

2 Cor. 15:

Phil. 4. 13.

1 Chron. 29.

Ruth 1.

Psal. 66. 20.

the Lord, and in the power of his might. When you purpose in the things of God, get God in as your surety, so did *David*, *Be surety for thy servant for good.* Undertake for me, that I shall do, what I have sworn to do. Your own purposes alone, against any particular Lust, do but latch the door; a temptation opens it with ease: It's your going out against it in the name of the Lord, as *David* did against *Goliath*, that overcomes it. And just so it is in your purposes to that which is good; *I have laboured*, saith *Paul*; yet not *I*, but the grace of God that was with me. He durst not say, *I can do all things*, without adding through *Christ* that *strengthens me*.

Therefore, *thirdly*, be as much in Prayer, as in good Purposes. Pray as *David* did, *O Lord God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Israel thy servants, keep this for ever in the imaginations of the thoughts of the hearts of thy people, and prepare, or stablish their heart unto thee*: He mentions *Abraham, Isaac, and Israel*, because God made and kept his Covenant with them; and therefore begs of God to make his People Covenant-keepers, as well as Covenant-makers. *Keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the hearts of thy people*; This Resolution, to give what we have, and our selves too, to Thee. Keep this in the imagination, that is, in the purpose of the hearts of thy people. Prayer is a good Midwife to purposes of doing good. If Prayer upon good purposes, have Affection, and Faith, and Poverty of Spirit in it; it will not return empty, as *Naomi* did, but full-handed. Such prayer is a trusty Messenger between God and his People: *Blessed be God*, saith *David*, *that hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me.* And so much for the first Observation, That a true Penitent stops not till he hath brought Resolution into Action. The Prodigal did, what he said he would do, *He said, I will arise, and go to my Father: and he arose, and came to his father.*

C H A P. XII.

Which sheweth, that in every true Convert, there is a principle of spiritual Life; the first great sign of which, is his departure from sin. From the same words,

And he arose, and came to his Father.

WHen the prodigal came to himself, he revived, he put forth the actions of Life. There was a principle of spiritual Life infused into him: He arose from the dead, Jesus called him out of his spiritual death, as he did *Lazarus* out of his Grave. As the motion of the Wheels was by the spirit of the living creatures; so is a sinners motion towards God; It is as he is moved by the Spirit. As holy men of God spake, *as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.* Few men know what repentance, or rising from spiritual death means, or what power goeth to it. No less, but more, than went to the creation of the Sun, or the resurrection of *Lazarus* to Life: *We are the workmanship of God created in Christ Jesus.* It's Gods Power alone, that quickens a sinner that is dead in trespasses and sins: You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins. Yea, this needs more power than the work of creation: for as the power of God found nothing to make all things of; so he found no resistance. But here, he finds that which is worse than nothing, the greatest resistance the creature can make: *How often would I, and ye would not?*

It's true, sometimes this is spoken of, as the sinners work; but then it is to be understood onely of his Duty. *Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?* All Duty is not the measure of a mans Power: A Creditor may call for his debts, of a man that hath disabled himself utterly to pay them. God calls for no more from man, than once he gave him power enough to do.

ch. 6. 44.

But now saith Christ, *No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me, draw him.* The raising of a sinner from spiritual death, is a work of Omnipotency; the act is his, but the Power is Gods: It is grace that brings a sinner into a state of grace. But of this, when I come to those words; *This my son was dead, and is alive again.* Onely you may see, by what hath been said; That the repenting sinner, is no less than a wonder. And its strange, that we do not wonder at such an one more. When *Lazarus* rose from his grave, it amazed all men; It was the great talk and discourse of all; the *Pharisees* and *Rulers*, they meet in Counsel about it; and if they take not some course, *All men will believe in Jesus:* and the people, they flock to see *Lazarus*.

John 12. 9.

Jude. 9.

Doutless there is great striving betwixt God and Satan about the dead sinner; as there was betwixt *Michael* the Arch-Angel and the Devil, about *Moses* his dead body. But I proceed.

He arose and came to his father. Life is active, natural life is, much more is spiritual life; which in some degree, is the life of God; and so all it's action and motion, is toward God, and for God, and with God. Spiritual life is of the Divine nature: And as spiritual life is the most excellent life, so it is the most powerful, as it is said of the word of God. Wherever spiritual life comes, it comes with great power. It hath more power over the Devil, than *Adam* had in his state of Innocency. *It overcomes the wicked one;* Yea, this life hath power with God, as *Jacob* had. And it hath right to all things; and can possess all things, and can do all things. But the great end of spiritual life is, to capacitate a man for communion with God. It's said here, that when the prodigal came to himself, he arose and came to his Father. So then the great Doctrine from these words is,

H. b. 4. 12.

1 John 2. 14.

Gen. 32. 28.

2 Cor. 3. 22.

2 Cor. 6. 10.

Phil. 4. 13.

Doct. That a sinner in his conversion comes to God, or returns from sin to God: *If ye will return, O Israel, saith the Lord, return unto me:* herein they were defective, *they return, but not to the most high.* They made a shew of repentance, but it was a repentance to be repented of; they returned but came short of God in conversion; a sinners first work is regressive, from sin to God. When he is come home to God, then his work is progressive: he goes from strength to strength; and

Ags 26. 18.

Jer. 4. 1.

Hos. 7. 16.

Psal. 84. 7.

and is changed from glory to glory. Sin is the *Terminus a quo*, 2 Cor. 3. 18. the excentrick or irregular course from which; and God is the *Terminus ad quem*, the Center to which the sinner moves in his conversion. If he stop at civility, his conversion is nothing; or if he stop at a form of godliness, or any thing else before he comes to God, his repentance is not *Repentance to Salvation*, not 2 Cor. 7. 10. *to be repented of*. There are many sinners who seem to be upon their return towards God; yet perish in the way. As *Israel* Psal 2. 12. returned from *Egypt*, but never came to *Canaan*. Tho there be no middle state betwixt a state of sin and a state of grace; yet a man may return from any sin, and sinful ways, and yet not return home to God. The prodigals leaving the far countrey, had been nothing, if he had not returned to his Fathers house. All a sinners returnings, are but wandrings, unless he return to God; as *Israel* wandered betwixt *Egypt* and *Canaan*.

But no man can return to God, except withall he first returns from sin. *Adams* hiding himself from God, when he had sinned, proves that sin is a departing from God. And so repentance is a departing from sin. Every man in a state of sin saith in his heart to God, *Depart from us*. He doth not beseech him to depart from him, as the *Gadarenes* did Christ, Job 21. 14. Marth 8. 34. for fear; but he doth it out of choice; as the prodigal went into a far countrey from his Father, upon choice, to satisfy his lusts. But now when a man returns to God, he departs from sin; he unloos his sins, as much as repentance for them can do it. He undoth, to his uttermost, all that he had done in his natural state: he now walks contrary to his former self. As the Jaylor that had used *Paul* and *Silas* cruelly, when he was converted, he *washed their stripes*; and it may be, bathed them with his Tears as *Mary-Magdalen* did Jesus his feet. Not that a man in his conversion to God leaves all sin behind him, and carries none with him: no, experience disproves this. Tho no sin be compatible or consistant with a state of glory, yet it is with a state of grace. Tho no clouds can be mixed with the Sun in the Heavens, yet they may with the light of the Sun in the Air. Glory annihilates and removes the very being of sin; grace onely takes away the dominion of it. There is no man free from all sin; but hath reason daily to bewail that sin which dwelleth in him, as *St. Paul* did,

Rom. 7

There

Acts 15.

There is not a Scripture-Saint, but carries the scars of sin : *Abraham*, and *Lot*, and *Moses*, and *David*, and *Jonah*, yea and *Paul*, and *Barnabas*. But tho no man is fully free from sin, yet every returning sinner becomes free,

1st. From the law of sin, *Rom.* 8. 2.

2 Sam. 13
Reim. 7. 15.

2^{ly}. Full of enmity to all sin. A true convert hateth sin more than he lusted after it before; as *Amnon* did *Tamar* : *What I hate, that do I*, saith *St. Paul*.

Hof. 14. 8.

3^{dly}. He leaves behind him those particular and special sins whereby he most grieved and dishonoured God in his natural state. In conversion all sins are repented of, but some more observably; as those wherein we have more eminently walked contrary to God, and more daringly sinned against him. Thus we find, when *Ephraim* repented, and returned to God, he cast away his Idols, with the greatest abhorrence: *What have I to do any more with Idols*. Idolatry had been *Ephraim's* God-provoking sin: and now *Ephraim* abhorreth Idols; saith to them, as in *Isa.* 30. *Get you hence. Then said Samuel to Israel, If ye do return to the Lord with all your hearts, then put away your strange gods, and Asheroth*. Especially *Asheroth*, because that had been their great Idol.

1 Sam. 7. 3.

Deut. 9. 7.

Every man in his natural state, ordinarily, hath his *Delilah* in his bosom, his Idol in his heart, his beloved lust; either drunkenness, or uncleanness, or covetousness, or pride of life, or pride of parts: and at his conversion, tho he repent of all sin, and mourn over all; yet chiefly, over these daring and provoking sins: as *Moses* said to *Israel*, *Remember how ye provoked God in the wilderness*.

Lu. 19. 8.

Phil. 3. 8, 9.

When *Zachens* came to Christ, he repented of all sin, but especially of his oppression and extortion. So *Paul* who had been a proud *Pharisee*, and self-justiciary, and a cruel spirited man against the Saints, in his natural state; when he was converted, he was the greatest despiser of self-righteousness, and admirer of Christ's righteousness, of any man; and he was in a wonder that such a persecutor as he should obtain mercy.

1 Tim. 1. 13.

4^{thly}. When a sinner returns to God, he leaves behind him such sins as are inconsistent with a state of grace;
25,

1. Gross and scandalous Sins; these sins disappear after Conversion. Indeed it's possible for the regenerate to commit such sins as these, so did *Noah*, and *Lot*, and *David*; but not to live in them, as Sinners do before their Conversion; *Such were some of you*, saith the Apostle. A convert forsakes many sins, which were common with him before Conversion. *The time past of our lives may suffice us, to have fulfilled the will of the Gentiles.* 1 Cor 6. 11. 1 Pet 4. 3.

2. No reigning sin is consistent with a state of Grace. *Sin shall not have dominion over you, because ye are under grace.* Rom. 6. 14. Sin may be *Vincent*, but not *Regnant*, in a regenerate man; may overcome him, but not rule over him. Conquest respects Power, Dominion respects Will. It's true, Sin may have a tyrannical Power over a Saint, but not the Power of a Lord or Master, to whom he obeys; he may be in slavery to sin, but not a servant; that is a forced thing, this a thing of choice. *Paul* was sold under sin, but *Ahab* sold himself to sin. In the one there is unwillingness, great trouble and groaning. In the other there is consent, and content, they are willingly what they are. Rom. 7. 14. Rom. 7. 28. 2. Pet. 3.

Fifthly, In Conversion, a Sinners return from sin to God is unfeigned and free, not as *Phaltiel*s from his Wife, with a heavy heart; or as *Augustine* in his youth, who when he prayed against such or such a sin, had still a secret lusting after it. Before Conversion, men sin with all their heart, and therefore in Conversion they should turn to God with all their heart, as *Ruth* followed *Naomi*; she did it with all her Soul, she would not be intreated to the contrary: *Intreat me not to return from following thee; for where thou goest, I will go.* 2 Sam 3. 2. Chron. 6. 28. The most pleasing Lusts, the dearest Relations, the most appearing worldly Inconveniencies, cannot hinder a converts affectionate and melting return from Sin to God. As the Lord said of his Peoples return from *Babylon* to their own Countrey; *They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them.* Jer. 31. 9. And so we have seen how a Sinner in his Conversion returns from sin.

C H A P. XIII.

Sheweth, Wherein a Sinner in his Conversion returns to God. And first, to the Divine Image. From the same words,

And he arose, and came to his Father.

I Come now to the other Term, or part of a Sinners Conversion, his Return to God. Which consisteth in these four Particulars.

1. He returns to the Image and Likeness of God.
2. To acquaintance and Communion with God.
3. To due Subjection to God.
4. To that Dominion over other things recovered by Christ.

1. A Sinner in his Conversion returns to the Image and Likeness of God. None but rational Creatures are capable of the Image of God. The footsteps and the shadow of God may be seen in the whole Creation. A man may be known from a beast by his footsteps, or his shadow, or a great man from a little man; but there cannot be an individual knowledg, that he is this or that man, by either. So we may know that there is a God by the Creature; and that he is a great Almighty God. The *invisible things of him, from the creation of the World are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead.* But the Image of God is only to be seen in the rational Creature, Angels and Men. And therefore Angels are called *the sons of God*, and *Adam* is called *the son of God*.

There are two things required to an Image strictly so called.

Rom. I. 20.

Job I. 6.

Luke 3. 38.

First,

First, That it is to be like that, whose Image it is.

Secondly, That it be made from it. There must be more to make an Image, than likeness; for one Apple or Egg, may be like another; and yet the one is not the Image of the other. And therefore an Image must be made from that which it represents, and is the Image and likeness of. So the Impression on the Wax, is not only like the Seal, but is from the Seal, whereof it is the Image. And so, the Image of a mans Face in a Glass, is like it, and from it. In like manner, a Sinner in his Conversion, receives or is restored to the Image of God: he returns to a likeness to God, and this likeness is from God. He returns to that Image of God, after which man was created in his state of Innocency; yet with some difference. For,

First, Adam was made after the Image of God, like the Moon in the full, perfectly and fully; the Sun enlightens its whole Hemisphere. Man in his natural state since the fall, is like the Moon in the *Interlunium*, or space betwixt the old Moon and the new, altogether obscured. But the Image of God in Man returned to God, is like the light on the Moon, waxing and growing by degrees, till it come to the full. Now tho *Adam* was made perfectly Holy and Good yet not immutably holy and like God. But a converted Sinner, tho he be not like God, ὁλῶς, perfectly, but in part, yet he is like God, ὁμοτελῶς. 1 Cor. 15. he cannot lose his likeness to God, he cannot utterly fall from it.

Psal 37. 24.

Secondly, Adam received the Image of God, and likeness to God, immediately from God; but man in his Conversion hath it from God, through the Face of Jesus Christ, as shall be shewed in the close of this point.

Quest. But what is this Image or Likeness of God, to which a Sinner is restored in his Conversion?

Ans. The Apostle *Paul* resolves and branches it into three points. *First*, Knowledge; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him. *Secondly*, Righteousness. And *Thirdly*, True Holiness. And that ye put on the new man, which after God, or after the

Col. 3. 10.

Eph. 4. 24.

Image of God, is created in righteousness and true holiness. These, the Holy Ghost here calls, *the new man*, in 2 Cor. 5. 17. *The new creature*, in 1 John 3. 9. *The seed of God*, in 2 Pet. 2. 4. A mans being partaker of the divine nature.

First, He is restored to the Image of God in knowledge: Put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him. The Apostle John saith, that
 1 John 1. 5. God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. He is light; Knowledge and light is God Essence, he understands all things by his own Essence. God is Knowledge and Light it self; dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no
 1 Tim. 6. 16. man hath seen, nor can see.

Now when a man is renewed to the Image and likeness of God, he also is Light: Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord. And this in Rom. 12. 2. the Apostle calls, transformed by the renewing of the mind. The mind of a converted Sinner, is that which receives the Light of God, or Divine spiritual Light from God, as the air doth the Light of the Sun. Every Saint seeth light in Gods Light. God is the father of lights, and Saints are the children of light: the children of this world are wiser in their generations than the children of light.
 Eph. 5. 8. Psal 36.
 Jam. 1. 17.
 Luke 16. 8.

It may be said to every true convert, as the Prophet did to the Church, *Arise and shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.* As in nature the Sun may be called the Father of Light, which streams from it upon the Moor, and into the Air; so doth Light stream forth from God into Holy Angels, who were therefore called
 2 Cor. 11. 13. Angels of light; and into Saints, who are called Children of light. But to return a little, to that Scripture in Rom. 12. 2. where Christians are exhorted, to be transformed by the renewing of their minds; Be ye changed into another form or Image, in getting a new mind, or new light into the mind; so the Apostle elsewhere, *Be ye renewed in the spirit of your mind.* Natural men are darkness, their understandings are darkned, and so are alienated from the life of God. The minds of all men in their natural state, are blinded by the God of this World, the Devil; who hath great Power over the unbelieving World. Their mind, as to spiritual things, is like the Chaos in the beginning of the World, or the face of the deep, darkness is upon
 Eph 4. 23.
 Eph. 5. 8.
 Eph. 4. 18.
 2 Cor. 4. 4.
 Gen 1. 2.

it. But in a mans Conversion, God saith, *Let there be light, and there is light.* Light is the first work in the new Creature, as it was in the old. A converts eyes are opened as *Adams* Gen. 1 4. and *Eves* were, to see his nakedness, and the filthiness of his natural state, which he never saw before. He now knows the vileness of sin, and his own sinfulness in his former condition. *Paul* knew when he was converted, how sin had deceived him, Rom. 7. and how sin was exceeding sinful; whereas, in his natural state, he thought himself *blameless*, as that young man did, Phil. 3. 6. *Matth. 19.* A Sinner in his Conversion hath his eyes opened to see God *face to face*, as *Jacob* said he had done. He now Gen. 32. 30 knows God, as he never knew him before, in his Holiness, and Mercy, and Grace. And his eyes are opened to know Jesus Christ, as it was said of those two Disciples, *Luke 24.* He knows Christ, as he never knew him yet; he sees that necessity of Christ, and Excellency in him, which he did not in his natural state. Then he thought as the *Jews*, *There is no beauty in him, why we should desire him.* And he hath such Isa. 53 2. a sight of the beauty of Grace and Holiness, and the excellency and Power of the Scriptures, which he never yet had. There is no true convert, but can bear witness to all this. He hath a new Light indeed, so that all things are become new with him; Sin and Grace are other things in his eyes than 2 Cor. 5 17. they were formerly; God is another kind of God, and Christ another Christ, than he thought of in his natural state.

Quest. But is there not many a natural man that hath more Knowledge of God, and of the Scriptures, than some converts have? Are there not many knowing learned men, not only in Nature, Philosophy, and Politicks, but also in the Scriptures, and points of Divinity, and yet are wicked and ungodly men?

Ans. I confess there is many a bad man that hath more historical Knowledge of God, and the Scriptures, than many godly men. Such men may be enlightened, may have the common Illumination of the Spirit, that after fall away. *Balaam* had an excellent Spirit of Prophecy. And *Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?* Say those, whom Christ Heb. 6. 4. Num 22. 23; will not own. *Achitophel* was a man of great parts, he spake Matth. 7. 22.

as if a man had enquired at the oracles of God, 2 Sam. 16.

But godly men, even the meanest of them in respect of natural or acquired parts, have a knowledge of God, and of the things of God, which exceeds all that which others have; and that is, Experimental Knowledge of God, and the things of God: They *tast and see that the Lord is gracious*. And so, that the Lord is Holy, and Merciful, and Righteous, which no natural man in the World doth; he hath not this tast and sight of God, that a Saint hath. The men that were with Paul at his Conversion, heard a voice, but they saw not him that spake, that is the Lord Jesus, whom Paul saw; so hath every converted Sinner a sight of God, and of the things of God, which no other man hath: *The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, neither can he, because they are spiritually discerned*. He cannot speak of the things of the Spirit, by experience, as a spiritual man can do: *The spiritual man judgeth all things*; he can give a Judgment of spiritual things as well as of natural; because *the spirit teacheth him*; he is the Spirits Pupil; *He shall teach you all things*, saith Christ. God revealeth these things to us by his spirit; and *the spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of God*. A natural man judgeth of natural things; they are within his Sphere; but in spiritual things, he can only say *Sibboleth*. How simply did *Nichodemus*, a Doctor in Israel, reason with Christ about Regeneration? *How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter a second time into his mothers womb and be born?* Thus we find the Rulers of Israel looked on Peter and John, as ignorant and unlearned men; in the Greek it is *Idiots*, men of no Education; and yet it's said, they marvelled at their boldness; the Greek word signifies not only confidence and fearlessness, but freedom of Speech and Elocution.

The Divine Knowledge of some godly men, otherwise of mean ability, is sometimes amazing to others not unlearned.

All a natural mans light and learning, is but darkness to the light that a spiritual man hath in the things of God. Yea, the common gifts of the Spirit, for the edification of the Church, are but darkness to the light, which Grace brings in to the Soul, as Night is darkness to the day, even when the Moon is in the full. There is a Mystery in the Knowledge of the Saints, they have things revealed to them, which none of the Princes

of this World have known, *Things that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath entered into the heart of a man, a natural man; even the deep things of God, 1 Cor. 2. 9, 10. To you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God.* *Matt. 13. 11.*

Quest. But wherein doth the difference appear betwixt the common Illumination of the spirit, and the light that comes in with grace?

Ans. A natural man may know the same things for matter, that a spiritual man knows; but not for manner; the one knows them speculatively and historically: the other knows them Experimentally and powerfully; the one only knows them, *1 John. 2. 3.* but the other knows, that he knows them. The knowledge of the one lies in the upper Region the head; but the knowledge of the other, like *Aarons* Oyntment, runs down to his heart, and affections, and feet, that is, his conversation; he feels what he knows; he feels Gospel truths, to be truths: he feels the goodness of them, and the power of them. His light is like the light of the Sun, a warming heating light, and full of influence both upon his heart and life. But there is no such thing in the illuminations of natural men, tho it be the gift of the spirit; their knowledge is like *Rachel*, fair, but barren; they may know the will of God, and approve the things that are more excellent, and yet have but a form of knowledge, without any power. Whereas the light that comes in with grace, its a very powerful light, full of influence on the will, and the affections, and conversation. It is humbling light, as that which *Paul* saw was, for it discovers not only beams, as the light of nature and the common illumination of the spirit doth; that is, grosser sins, externall sins; but it discovers moths, as the light of the Sun doth; and keeps a man continually in the view of heart-sins, and the sinfulness of his nature, and infirmities, yea iniquities of his holy things. This, converted Souls can testify by their experience. *Rom. 2. 18.* *Acts 9.*

In a word, that knowledge and light in which men are renewed after the Image of God, it is a transforming light; we all, (all we believers) *with open face beholding as in a glass 2 Cor. 3. 18.* the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same Image from glory

Gen. 30. 39. *glory to glory.* When *Labans* sheep saw the party-coloured rods, it wrought so upon their fancies; as they had lambs like them. Surely the sight a man hath of God in his conversion, hath a transforming power, much more wonderful. The eye of Faith looking upon the promises of the Gospel, hath as great a power in forming the Soul into the divine Image, as nature hath in any of her admired operations.

2 Pet. 1. 4.

Thus much for that spiritual wisdom or knowledge, the first branch of the Image and likeness of God, to which a sinner in his conversion is restored; as God is light, so is he.

CH A P. XIV.

Proceedeth further to shew, wherein a man, in his conversion, is restored to the Divine Image.

Eph. 4. 24.
Eccl. 7. 29.

THE second thing in Gods Image to which a sinner in his conversion is restored, is Righteousness; *And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness.* God made man upright. And in conversion, a man is so made again, as to his principle, and as to his operations, progressively, till he come to perfect righteousness.

Rom. 7. 22.
Psal. 143. 10

Psal. 11. 6.

Now as the former part of Gods Image and likeness, Divine knowledge and light, is principally seated in the understanding, as natural light in the Sun; so this in the will. A man hath now a will conformable to the will of God, his will keeps pace with the will of God: *I delight in the law, or will of God, as to the inward man. Teach me, O God, to do thy will.* It holds correspondency with the whole will of God: *Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect to all thy commands.*

Many Learned Men refer this righteousness to the commands of the second table; and so to Righteousness towards men. But I conceive, that the Righteousness of a Believer, is the attitude of the will, in answer to the whole will of God. The will now doth not pick and chuse; but would stand perfect

fect and compleat in all the will of God. The will of men before conversion, is their worst faculty, *we will not hearken unto thee, say the Jews, but we will certainly do whatsoever goeth out of our own mouth.* But afterwards it is their best: *to will is present with me: and the good that I would do, I cannot.* Grace determines the will only to good. It is as extensive to its object, that is the will of God, as is the will of the Angels in Heaven: *thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven: Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*

Col. 4. 12.
Jer. 4. 16, 17.
Rom. 7. 18, 19.
Math. 6. 10.
Acts 9. 6.

Question. What is Gods personal righteousness?

Answer. It is the Rightitude of his will, and works; in answer to his Nature. God is his own Rule: and the Will of God is the rule of Righteousness in man; and this Righteousness is the Image of that in God: *I come to do thy will, O my God.* Now the will of a man upon his conversion, answers Gods will, as to the matter, manner, and end of all that he doth. In all which carnal men fail: they make sins of their own, besides what God makes: and they make those no sins, which God makes to be so; as the Scribes and Pharisees made it a sin in Jesus Christ to heal that woman, *Luke 13. 14.* And so they made it a sin in his Disciples, that they *transgressed the traditions of the elders:* and Christ told them, that they *transgressed the commands of God by their traditions.* And such men make a Religion of their own; men, by nature, are addicted to will worship. *Dan* and *Bethel*, and green Trees, and Groves are chosen for places of worship; rather than *Jerusalem*, and the Altar of the Lord. Men are naturally inclined to *set up their posts by Gods posts.* And they are commonly their own motives and end in what they do; self-ends are their mark: *did ye at all fast unto me, even unto me, saith the Lord? they do alms, and pray, and fast to be seen of men, and to have praise of men.*

Psal. 40. 7.
Matth. 15.
Col. 2. 23.
Ezek. 43. 8.
Ezek. 7. 5.
Matth 6.

But now there is a contrary spirit in men converted to God: they look to the will of God, to tell them what is sin, and what their duty; and would not make any thing of either; but what God makes such. And for manner, and ends of their works, still God is first and last with them. God made all things for himself; and they do, or would do all things for God,

Prov. 16. 4.

God, ultimately. They look at subordinate ends no farther than they have allowance from God, who is first and last with them in all: *But as of sincerity but as of God, in the sight of God, speak ye in Christ.* In conversion a sinner returns to an upright heart; *let my heart be fenced in thy statutes.* Job was a perfect and upright man. There is no reigning guile in a gracious heart, as Jesus said of Nathaniel, *behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.* And this is the second part of the Image and likeness of God, to which a sinner is restored in his conversion; he is renewed according to him that created him, or converted him, *in righteousness.* His Righteousness is like to Gods; like, for quality; tho not equality. Observe that in John, *every one that doth righteousness, is born of him.* And Chap. 3. 7. *He that doth righteousness, is righteous, even as He is righteous:* and v. 10. *Whoever doth not righteousness, is not of God.* He maketh God his end in all he doth; and that by the Rule of his will. And tho his righteousness be still imperfect, yet it is progressive towards perfection, and rests not in any centre, till it comes to that point.

Thirdly, a sinner in his conversion is restored to the Image and likeness of God, in true Holiness. Put ye on the new man, which after God, or after his Image, *is created in true holiness.* Every convert is a new Creature: and conversion is another creation: *ye are the workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus.*

But why doth the Apostle say, true Holiness?

First, in distinction from legal or ceremonial Holiness in the law; which was but a typical Holiness, a shadow of Holiness.

Secondly, in opposition to feigned Holiness, which Satan and Hypocrites may counterfeit. Satan may transform himself into an angel of light: and there may be wolves in sheeps cloathing.

2 Cor. 11. 13.
Matth. 7. 15.

Quest What is Gods Holiness?

Ans. It is his essence; he is the Holy one, *Isa. 57. 15.* As Gods Righteousness is the rectitude of his will and works, in answer to his nature: so his Holiness is his nature or essence it self. And therefore as Gods Nature is incomprehensible, so is his Holiness. Our shell cannot measure this Ocean: Saints and

and Angels cannot fully define the Holiness of God. As Astronomers, by their instruments, may guess at the measure of the Sun : so by the Scriptures, and our own hearts, if holy, we may guess at the Holiness of God. Of all the Attributes of God, the Angels chiefly sound out this ; *Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts.* And this is it, that God swears by : *Once have I sworn by my holiness.* God is *Glorious in holiness.* It is his pure Essence which admits of no impurity or defilement in himself, nor allows of any in man, but abhorreth it. *O Lord, thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity.* God cannot see any thing that is impure ; and nothing that is impure can see God : therefore saith our Saviour, *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.* Sin and holiness are the extreamest and highest opposites that can be. Gods Holiness is not so properly one Attribute, as the purity of all his Attributes.

Quest. What is that Holiness in man by which he bears the Image of God ?

Ans. Holiness is not any particular grace in the Saints, as Faith, or Love is ; but is a pure Divine disposition spreading its self through all the powers of the Soul. It is the Divine Nature that Saints are partakers of ; Holiness to the Lord, is written upon all their faculties So that as the Eternal power and Godhead may be seen in the creation : so the Purity, Mercy, Love, Truth, and Justice of God, may be seen in the Regenerate Nature of a man. And therefore, as the Righteousness of man is the rectitude of his Will in answer to the revealed Will, or word of God ; So Holiness, properly taken, is the Rectitude of his Will and Nature in answer to the Divine Nature. So that it appears and manifesteth it self two ways,

First, In a mans dedicating of himself to God and his use. As things and persons, under the Law, when devoted and dedicated to Gods use, were called. Holy : *I am thy servant ; truly, I am thy servant.* *The Macedonians gave themselves to the Lord.* And, *God hath set apart for himself,* for his own use, *him that is godly.*

N

Secondly.

Secondly. It appears in his imitating of God. What was *Enoch's* holiness, but his *walking with God*? And what was *Joshua's* holiness; it was his *following the Lord fully*, his striving to imitate God: *Be ye followers of me, as I am of Christ*: in the Greek it is, be ye *imitators* of me as I am of Christ. And the Apostle *John* saith, *He that hath this hope, purifieth himself, even as he is pure.* This then is the third part of the Image of God, to which a sinner, in his conversion is restored. Nothing makes a man so like God, as holiness: *Be ye holy, as I am holy.* Nor one man, or one Angel, so unlike another.

Fourthly. A sinner in his return to God, is made after the Divine Image, in another way than *Adam* was at first; he receives the Image of God, through a Mediator. It's through or in the face of *Jesus Christ*, that the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, shineth into our hearts. The Apostle, it's likely alludes to the glory of God, which *Aaron* and *Israel* saw in *Moses* his face, when he came down from the Mount. The children of *Israel* could not stedfastly behold the face of *Moses* for the glory of his countenance; so that *Christ*, as Mediator, hath the glorious Image of God first upon himself, and from him it is communicated to us: *The word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us, and we beheld his glory, as the glory of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth.* The glory of God, in *Moses* his face, shone onely on *Israel's* face; but the glory of God in *Christ*, shines into our hearts. And hence it is, that we are said to be of God, in *Christ Jesus*: and to be the workmanship of God; created in *Christ Jesus*; and, it pleased the father, that in him all fullness should dwell; that from his fullness we may receive grace for grace. And he is said to be the everlasting Father: in respect of God the Father, he is the everlasting Son; in respect of Believers, he is the everlasting Father; he begets them to that likeness to himself, which shall never be lost, as it was in the first *Adam* Believers are predestinated to be conformed to him: to bear the image of the heavenly. And the Apostle, to the *Galatians*, speaks of *Christ* formed in men. So that the Scriptures abound in the proof of this point, That the Image of God is conveyed to men, in their conversion, through *Jesus Christ*. Even as the light from

from the Sun, is, through the Air, to the World. And this is done,

First. Because God doth all for man, now, by a Mediatour. Reas. 1. Gal. 3 19.
The Law was ordained in the hands of a Mediator, to shew, that Christ steps betwixt us and the condemning power of the Law. The Law, of it self, separates sinners from God; It takes no notice of their repentance; It stands upon satisfaction.

Repentance is a Gospel grace. It was Christ that ordered repentance and remission of sins, to be preached to the World: and it was repentance which he preached: Luke 24. 47. Matth. 4. 17.
Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. There is no transacting betwixt God and man, since the fall, but by a Mediator, a middle person that hath the nature of both, of God and man. I speak not of what God might have done by his absolute power; but of the way he hath constituted in which to deal with lost man, and that is, by a Mediator. He gave *Israel* his Law, in Tables of stone, by the hand of a Mediator, a Typical Mediator: and he gives not his Image to a mans heart, but in the face of *Jesus* the Mediator.

Siccanly, Believers receive the Image of God by *Jesus* Christ, Reas. 2.
that they may lose it no more. There is no stability in the nature of man, or Angels. But in Christ God-Man, there is: he is a quickening spirit; he keeps spiritual life in every Saint, as the fire of the Sanctuary was continually kept in. He is the Father of eternity: *The same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.* If believers should have the Image of God formed in them onely as it was in *Adam*, at the first; they would lose it presently again. Man, of himself, is *unstable as water*, as it was said of *Reuben*. Job 4. 18. I Cor. 15. 45. 1st. 9. 7. Heb. 13. 8. Gen 49 4.
But receiving the Image of God, through Christ, he may call himself, in a sober sence, an Unchangeable Creature.

The Image of God indeed may be eclipsed in a Saint; but it still remains in him: as the Sun may be, yet keep its nature and motion in the Heavens. The Divine Nature, is not always alike apparent in any man: As Christs Divinity was sometimes more concealed and veiled, than at others.

Take the condition of a regenerate man in the whole, and it is an increasing condition, he goes from grace to grace, from faith to faith and from strength to strength; but take it apart, and look upon particular seasons, and we shall see Holiness, Faith Patience and other Graces, sometimes at an Ebb. As a Child, tho always in a Progressive motion to Manhood; yet, in some distemper, he may go back a little. But when the Distemper is over, he recovers the strength he had lost. So that the Image of God, being restored by Jesus Christ, can never be lost.

CHAP. XV.

Maketh application of the particulars which constitute The Divine Image.

I Shall now make Application of the several branches of this Image of God, to which a sinner in his conversion is restored: of which the first is Knowledge.

First, This informs us, what a dismal Doctrine that of Rome is, That Ignorance is the Mother of Devotion. They put out the poor Peoples eyes, that they may make sport with them; as the *Philistines* did by *Sampson*; yea, as the Devil doth by poor creatures whom he keeps ignorant of the truth, and whose minds he blindeth, that he may lead them captive at his will.

If divine knowledg be the Image of God; then certainly ignorance and blindness in the things of God, is the image of the Devil, who is *kept in chains of darkness*. The Devil hath knowledg, but its such as helps him to be more wicked: and so doth the knowledge of Natural men. But for that light, which lights a man through this World to Heaven, as the Pillar of fire did *Israel* towards *Canaan*; they have none of this in their minds. Let this be considered, that God speaks not more terribly to any kind of men, than to ignorant Souls: *They are a people of no understanding; therefore he that made*

Judges 16.

2 Cor. 4. 6.

2 Tim. 2. 26.

2 Pet. 2. 4.

Jude. 6.

Mat. 27. 11.

them.

them will not save them; and he that formed them, will shew them no favour: this is the condemnation, the great damning sin, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light. The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God: that is, God in Christ. John 3. 19. 2 Thes. 1. 7.

Secondly, Take heed of over curious knowledg. The nature of man is inclined to it: this moved our first Parents to eat of the forbidden Fruit, that their eyes might be opened, and they be as Gods knowing good and evil, Gen. 3. 5. It was curiosity that made the Bethshemites look into the Ark, which was a dear sight to them. That was a question of curiosity put to Jesus Christ, *Lord are there few that are saved?* But he answered their question, by putting them upon their duty; *Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many shall seek to enter in and shall not be able.* Of this nature was that question of Peter; *Lord, what shall this man do?* And Christ answers him with a check, *what is that to thee? follow thou me.* And so was that question of the Disciples after Christs resurrection, *Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel.* For which he gives them a tectet reproof: *It is not for you to know the times and the seasons, which the father hath kept in his own power.* 1 Sam. 6. Luke 13. 32. John 22. 21. Acts 2. 6.

Seek not that knowledg, which puffeth up; but that which edifieth. That which makes you know your selves, and that which putteth you on to instruct and edify others. You may safely enquire after the mind and sense of God in his word; as the disciples did desire Jesus to open his Parables to them. You may seek for more light to discover the worst of your selves to you: *Lord, that which I see not, teach thou me.* And You may seek for more light to discover the best of Christ to you: Oh, that I may know him more and more, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings. Matth 13. John 34. 39. Psal. 139. 24. Phil. 3. 10.

Thirdly, Try your own knowledg in the things of God, whether it be such as shews the Image of God to be renewed in you? If so, it is

1. A marvellous Light. *Ye are a chosen generation, a peculiar people, that you should shew forth the praises of him that hath called* 1 Pet. 2. 9.

led you out of darkness into his marvellous light. It is light that discovers marvellous things to you; things that you wonder at:
 1 John. 3. 1. *Behold what manner of love the father hath shewed us, that we*
 John 14. 22. *should be called the sons of God. How is it Lord, that thou wilt manifest thy self to us, and not to the world?*

2. Its a powerful light: It is still changing you more and more into the likeness of God. Observe the Apostles words,
 v. 15. 2 Cor 3. 18. *We all, (all we that believe) with open face (having the vail pulled off our hearts which was over the hearts of the Jews) beholding as in a glass (in the Gospel) the glory of the Lord (The Holiness of the Lord, who is glorious in Holiness; and his rich mercy, free grace, and long-suffering towards sinners, the Glory which he shewed Moses) are changed into the same image, from glory to glory.*
 Exod. 15. 11. *(Spiritual light is a powerful transforming light) It changes a man into the likeness of the object it looks upon; there is the power of the Holy Ghost in it; as it follows) as by the spirit of the Lord.*

3. It's a quickning warming light, like that of the Sun: It quickens Grace, quickens to duty, sets faith on work: *they that know thy name, will put their trust in thee: And it sets prayer on work: If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that talks with thee, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.* So Pauls light from Christ, put him upon prayer presently, *behold he prayeth.*
 Psal. 9. 11. John. 4. 10. Acts 9. 11. Job 42. 6.

4. It's an humbling Light: *Now mine eyes have seen thee; wherefore I abhor myself in dust and ashes.* The light that Saul saw about him, cast him down: and the Light which shone within him, more; no man from thence-forth had more self-basing thoughts than he', who looked on himself to have been before his conversion, as the greatest of sinners; and after, *to be less than the least of all Saints.*
 2 Tim. 1. 14. Eph. 3. 8.

5. It is Experimental Light, it is Light that is felt; as it is said of the darkness in Egypt, that it was felt: Regenerate men have an Experimental Knowledge of God; not only to be God, but their God: *My God,* as Thomas said; and as Christ said, *I ascend to my father, and your father, to my God and your God.* And they have an Experimental Knowledge of the Scriptures to be the word of God as Jeremiah said, *His word was*

in my heart, as a burning fire. They feel God in them, and the Word of God, and Christ in them; *not I, but Christ liveth in me.* And they feel the Spirit in them, as he said, *The Spirit within me constraineth me.* They know the difference betwixt Sin and Grace by experience. Gal. 2. 20.
Job 32. 18.

2. For Application of the second Branch of Gods Image, to which Believers are reffer'd, that is, Righteousness.

And 1. This informs us of the vast difference betwixt a Natural and Regenerate mans will, in relation to the Will of God. The former Wills, and walketh contrary to God: *We will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart.* He contends with God for his will; so that if he could, he would always do contrary to the will of God: *O Jerusalem, wilt thou not be made clean?* Jer. 18. 12.
when shall it once be? If thou mightest have thy will, thou wouldst never be made clean. *How long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee?* Jer. 13. 27.
It implies she would ever have it so. *This people is fiddened back by a perpetual, or an eternal backsliding.* Jer. 4. 14.
Jer. 8. 5. It was a saying of an Ancient, *That a natural man would live for ever, that he might sin for ever.*

And when Convictions trouble a Carnal man, as sometimes they do, unless he is past feeling; then he wisheeth that this and that were not God's Will, and that sin were not sin: As Naaman said, *In this thing, the Lord pardon thy servant,* 2 Kings 5. 18.
when I bow down my self in the house of Rimmon: This is the best temper of a natural man, as to the will of God. But a true convert hath a will of another temper; such a mans will is lost or swallowed up in Gods Will. What Saints and Angels do in Heaven, that he Wills on Earth. There is something of a glorified Will in a Saint here; a Will to Sin no more: as a natural man would sin always, so a regenerate man would not sin at all, and this Will is taken for their Deed; God so takes it, when the impediment cannot be removed: *If there be a willing mind, it is Accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not.* 2 Cor. 8. 12.

A Regenerate man is not only conformed to the Will of God, but he is transformed into it; It is not only in his actions, but in his heart and mind. *I will write my laws in their hearts,* and *Thy law is within my heart,* and *The law of his God* Heb. 8. 10.
Plal. 40 8.

Pfal. 37. 31. *is in his heart.* So that his Will stands to all the Will of God
 Col. 4. 12. or as the *Original*, he is filled with the Will of God. *Then*
 Psal. 119. 6. *shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect to all thy command-*
ments.

And as his Will is to do all the Will of God, so it is
 always thus; he would always do all the Will of God: *I*
 Psal. 119. 112. *have inclined my heart or will to do thy statutes always, even to*
the end.

Neither is the Will forced, but free in it: the Affections
 joyn with the Will; there is a longing desire to do the Will
 of God: *O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes;*
 Psal. 119. 5. *there is desire with delight: I delight to do thy will, O my God.*
 He saith, as Christ did, tho he can but liſp, *My meat is to*
 Psal. 40. 8. *do the will of him that sent me.* And *I came down from heaven,*
 John 4. 34. *not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.* I
 John 6. 38. *came into the World to do the Will of God.* When the flesh is
 weak, yet the Spirit is willing; his genius and property is
 to be proving *what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect*
 Rom. 12. 2. *will of God.* Even the will of a regenerate man, tho it comes
 not into action, is better than the most specious deeds of a na-
 tural man. And when he is tempted by Satan, who is at his
 Zech. 3. 8. right hand, as at *Joshua's*, or by sin that dwelleth in him,
 this is his grief, and makes him groan as *Paul* did. And he ex-
 Romans 7. *ceedingly grieves, when other men walk contrary to the Will*
of God; with David, his eyes run down with tears, because
 Psal. 119. 136. *men keep not his laws.* This is more than *Adam* did in his
 Innocency: Had he been affected with *Eves* disobedience, he
 would not have followed her example, but have said to her,
 as *Joseph* to his Mistress, *How shall I do this wickedness, and*
 sin against God? Or as the Lord to *Moses*, *Let it suffice thee,*
 Genes 39. *Deut 3. 26. speak no more to me of this matter.* Oh my Brethren, look to
 your hearts in this point: *He that doth righteousness, is right-*
 1 John 3. 7, 10. *eous, even as he is righteous; whosoever doth not righteousness,*
is not of God.

The will of a natural man is his ruin: *Voluntas tua, infernus*
est tuus, said Bernard; his Will is his Hell. The more of
 a mans will there is in sin, the more like he is to the Devil.
 Heb. 10. 26. And as wilfulness is the greatest Aggravation of Sin, so to
 be given up to it, is the greatest Judgment: *I gave them up*
 Psal. 81. 12. *to their own hearts lusts, and they walked in their own counsel.*

Oh

Oh then observe, how your will answers to the Will of God. Let this be the stated, and the only Rule of all you do. And so likewise, of all you wish and pray for; that Gods commands may be obeyed, and his Promises and Prophecies be fulfill'd.

3ly. For Application of the third Branch of God's Image, to which every regenerate man is conformed, viz. True Holiness.

And let every one see to it, that he carries this Eminent part of Gods Image in his Soul: *As he that hath called you is* 1 Pet. 1. 15. *holy, so be ye holy.* Holiness is that, which makes the difference betwixt an Angel and a Devil, betwixt Saints in Heaven, and the Damned in Hell. If you be not holy, you bear not Gods Image, but the Devils; *You are of your father the Devil.* John 8. 44.

Oh, look after the Divine Nature in your selves. The highest natural Parts, and the greatest spiritual Gifts, and the sweetest moral Virtues alone, make no man Holy; those things amount not to Holiness, no more than all the Fire and Torches on Earth, and all the Light in the Moon and Stars, can make it day. Had a man the greatest natural Parts, and spiritual Gifts in the World; could he speak with the Tongue of Men and Angels, (as *Herod* did); had he the gift of Prophecy (as *Balaam* had); did he understand all Mysteries, had he all Knowledge for the Interpretation of Scripture-Mysteries; (a gift of the Spirit in the Apostles 1 Cor. 13. 1, 2. days) and besides this, had he all Faith, (Faith of Miracles in the highest degree) so that he could remove Mountains; yet all this would not amount to Holiness. There are, that have 1 Cor. 14. 26. Matt. 7. 22, 23. Mark 10. 21. these, whom Christ will not own.

These may make a man useful to others, and so far lovely, as that Moralist was to Jesus, who beheld and loved him. But told him withal, *one thing thou lackest.* All these may be without Holiness. For Holiness, as the Schoolmen well describe it, is a mans applying his Mind and Actions to the Imitation of God in his Nature and Works.

Be ye followers, or imitators of God, as dear children. Let the Divine Nature manifest it self in you, by your loving that which he loves, and hating that which he hates: *Thou hatest*

Rev. 2. 15.

the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. My Brethren, see that you dedicate your selves to God, as a kind of first fruits of his creatures. That God have the greatest use of you, of your inward man, and your outward man.

Jam. 2. 18.

True Holiness hath a double Seat, In the heart; *Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.* And in the life; *Be ye holy in all manner of conversation.* If you seem never so holy in your outward deportment, and be not pure in heart, have not a holy Mind, a holy Will, and holy Affections; if the chief and choicest object of these, be not a Holy God, and Holy Things; all your external Holiness is nothing; It's but the carcase of Holiness without the Soul and Life of it. God is a Holy Spirit, and his converse is with Holy Spirits, in which he seeth his own Image.

Matth. 5. 8.

1 Pet. 1. 15.

But this Image must be visible to others in your Holy Conversation. If you be Holy within, you will also be Holy without. A Candle in a Lanthorn shines without it, as well as within it. If a man have a modest mind, it will appear in his Countenance. You cannot conceal Holiness in your Bosome; It will not be imprisoned. A Holy man is like a transparent Medium. You may see that *of a truth God is in him.* Where there is a Holy Principle, there will be Holy operations: as Light in the Sun will appear in rays and beams in the Air.

1 Cor 14.

And if you would bear Gods Holy Image more resplendently, comenearer to God, and keep nearer to him: *It's good for me to draw near to God.* You know how the Glory of God shone on Moses his face, by being with him on the Mount. Did we walk more with God, we should be a more Holy People, and the Glory of God would break forth upon us. It will make you more Holy, to converse with Holy Men: much more if you converse with the Holy One, with him that is Holiness it self, the Fountain of Holiness, as well as the fountain of Life. As the Moon, the more she gets from under the shadow of the Earth, receives more and more Light from the Sun, till she comes to the full: so a Saint, the farther he removes from the World, and the nearer he comes to the dissolution of his mortal part, he becomes more and more Holy, till at last he shines all over in perfect Glory.

Psal. 73. 28.

Exod. 34. 29.

Fourthly,

Fourthly, To make some application of the fourth particular. That we receive not the Image of God immediately from him, as *Adam* did; but through the face of *Jesus Christ*: the Children of *Israel* saw the glory of God, but it was in *Moses* his face: and a sinner in his conversion receives the Image of God through the Face of *Jesus Christ*; *He hath shined into our hearts the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ.* Of *Christ* who is the image of *John 1. 15.*
the invisible God, who is the brightness of his fathers glory, and John 14. 9.
the express image of his person. *Heb. 1. 3.*

God hath intrusted *Christ*, as Mediator, with his image, to make the impression of it where he will: *The Son quickeneth whom he will* *John 5. 21.* *The father hath given all things into the Sons hand* *John 3. 35.* *He is Lord Keeper, and chief Secretary; he is John 1. 18.* in his Fathers Bosome. And he is Master of Requests: *He Heb. 9. 24.* *appears in the presence of God for us.* The knowledge by which men are renewed to the Image of God, is in *Christ*: *In Col. 2. 3.* *him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.* And what Righteousness or rectitude of will we have towards the will of God, we must have it from him: he is *Jesus Christ the righteous; and every one that doth righteousness, is born of him.* *John 2. 1.* If ye be filled with the fruits of righteousness, it must *v. 29.* be by *Jesus Christ*. *Christ* is a pattern to us of that Righteousness of *Phil. 1. 11.* which the Light of Nature, and the Law of *Moses* were not, as in self-denial, love to enemies, love to sinners, love to Saints; I have given you an example, *that ye should love one another, as I have loved you.* And therefore he calls it a new *John 13. 34.* commandment. And so if we would have more Holiness from *Acts 3. 14.* God, we must have it by *Jesus Christ*; He is *the Holy one,* *Dan 9. 24.* and *the most Holy*; In the Hebrew it is, the Holiness of Holiness; Holiness it self, and the treasury of all the Holiness designed us by God the Father; indeed what the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle and Temple, was but a shadow of.

And this may encourage us to look to *Christ*, by proper acts of faith, for more Holiness. He hath designed by his Death, *Col. 1. 22.* to present us Holy to his Father. And God hath chosen us *Eph. 1. 4.* in *Christ*, that we should be holy. So that here is work for faith; let this Eye be fixed on the Face of *Jesus Christ*, for more of his glorious Holiness to shine into our hearts. There

are other objects of Faith, but Christ is the chief. Oh let Faith make you lean on Jesus his Bosome. Vision will make us like him in Heaven; and faith will make us like him here. *Moses made all things according to the Pattern he received. And Christ is our pattern; we must be, and do, like him: He hath left us an example, that we should follow his steps.* Oh let this point have place in your Prayers, place in your meditations; let it be one of the great objects of your faith, and of your affections. It is the design of Satan, to interrupt you in this very thing: *Lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine into you.*

Let us consider how much Christ pressed his Disciples, and in them, us also to make use of him, when he was gone in our nature to the Father; then saith he, *I will pray the father; And I will send the spirit, and he shall receive of mine and shew it unto you: and whatsoever you shall ask in my name, I will do it: I will see it shall be done, you shall not lose your labour.* Oh be followers of Christ; transact with God by Christ. This is the mark by which God knows his own, in the croud of the World, That *they are followers of the Lamb.* They are bought from amongst men, being *the first fruits* to God, and to the Lamb.

CHAP. XVI.

Insisteth on the second Particular, wherein a true Convert returns to God; which is Communion with him.

I Come now to the second thing, wherein Man in his Conversion returns to God; and that is, to Acquaintance and Communion with God. The former fits him for this; he is re-made to the Image of God, that he may in joy Communion with him; his chief happiness now, as it was in his state of Innocency. God made not mans Soul, as he did his Body; this was of the Earth, that was from Heaven, the breath, the

the Image of God, whose *delights now were with the sons of men.* By the fall, man lost this Blessedness. *He hid himself from the presence of the Lord:* He fell from Communion with God, to converse with the Devil. Man in his natural state is a great stranger to God, he lives as without God in the World; but at his Conversion, his Acquaintance and Communion with God are renewed; he is no more a stranger. He can now speak of that Scripture by experience, *The tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.* And so of that, *Truly our fellowship is with the father, and with the son Jesus Christ.* He is now the Friend of God, as God called Abraham; and Christ his Disciples; *Ye are my friends, intimate, bosome Friends.*

Quest. But what is Acquaintance and Communion with God?

Ans. It is a sweet agreement betwixt God and our Faculties. Betwixt God and our thoughts: *My meditation of him shall be sweet.* Betwixt God and our Affections: *Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.* When we taste sweetness in the Creature, this is a kind of Communion with it. *Truly the light is sweet,* when the object is futable to the Eye, this is a kind of Communion betwixt them. So when God is a futable good to the Heart and Affections, this is Communion with God. Or to speak more fully, when God works by Divine Influence on our Souls, and our thoughts as the effect hereof, work much, and with delight on God. As Communion betwixt Man and Man, is when they take Complacency in one another, as *Jonathan and David* did, their Souls were knit to one another. So God and Saints take delight in one another: He desires to hear their Voice, and to see their Face, and they delight to see his: *Lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.* Lord, *show us thy face.* And they delight to hear his Voice; *I will hear what God the Lord will say.* A contrary Spirit to that in *Adam*, when he had lost Communion with God, *I heard thy voice, and was afraid.* This is a Riddle to a natural man; but after his Conversion, God meets him as he did *Jacob*.

Hosea 12. 4. *cob in Bethel, and there speaks with him. The Lord passeth by*
 Exod. 34. 6. *him, as he did by Moses, and shews him his Glory; he makes*
him to know Him by his own experience, to be The Lord, the
Lord God merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in
goodness, and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin. And
 Psal. 63. 5. 6. *hereupon his thoughts are much with God; My soul shall be sa-*
tisfied as with marrow and fatness, when I remember thee on my bed,
and meditate on thee in the night-watches. He seeth God with a
delightful wonder in his works: This is the Lords doing, and it is
 Psal. 118. 23. *marvellous in our eyes. He is intimately acquainted with the word*
 Psal. 37. 31. *of God, it is in his heart, and in his mind, and it abideth in him.*
 Heb. 8. 10. *He well knows God in his Promises; he feels many of them*
 1 John 2. 14. *fulfilled in himself, as Solomon said, Blessed be the Lord, that*
 1 Kings 8. 56. *hath given rest to his people Israel, according to all that he pro-*
mised, there hath not failed one word of all his good promise,
which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant. And as Da-
 Psal. 119. 65. *vid saith, Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O Lord, ac-*
cording to thy word. But as his likeness to God, so his Com-
munion with him, is eminently dependant on Jesus Christ.
 Eph. 1. 4. *He knows, that God chose him in Christ, and that God is*
 2 Cor. 5. 19. *reconciled to him in Christ, and that he is the workmanship of*
 Eph. 2. 40. *God, created in Christ Jesus, and that he is of God in Christ;*
 Eph. 1. 16. *and that he is the righteousness of God in Christ. He seeth the*
 2 Cor. 5. 21. *Father in the Son, and he knows the Father, as the son re-*
 John 14. 9. *vealeth him. This is the most excellent and comfortable way*
 Matth. 11. 27. *of knowing God. The knowledg of God out of Christ, is*
 as a mans looking immediately upon the Sun in its Glory, it
 dazles and hurts the sight. We know how terrible God was
 to Israel without a Mediator: *Oh speak thou with us from God,*
 Exod. 20. 19. *but let not God speak with us, lest we die; and Moses was a type*
of Christ therein.

To know God out of Christ, is to dwell as it were, with
 devouring fire, and with everlasting burnings, Isa. 33. 14. All
 our boldness towards God, is by Jesus Christ. Ephes. 3. 12. *In*
whom we have boldness, and access with confidence, by the faith of
him. Having such an high Priest, let us go with boldness to the
Throne of grace, Heb. 4. 16. Yet withal, the more holy and
gracious Converts are, the more familiar God will be with them.
Aarons sin about the golden Calf, had begot some strangeness in
God to him, he might not come so nigh God as Moses did: nor

Jobs friends so nigh as himself: *Job* 41. 8. *My servant Job shall pray for you, for him will I accept.* *Abraham* must go up to the Mount, but his Servants must stay at the bottom of it. And onely three of *Christs* Disciples must go with him to see his glory, *Peter, James, and John*; altho there were some particular reasons why they, and not the rest: they were to see his Agony, as well as his Glory: and *Peter* was to die a signal death for him; *Jhn* 21. 18, 19. And *James* was the first that lost his life for him, *Acts* 12. 1. And *John* was to maintain the Divinity of *Christ*, against many Anti-*Christs* in his days, 1 *Jehn* 2. 22.

Application. First, This informs us, that acquaintance with God, is more than a bare knowledge of God. We may know a man that we have no acquaintance or intimacy with: the *Heathens* knew God, *Rom.* 1. 21. yet were very strangers to him. The Devils knew *Jesus*, *We know thee who thou art, the holy one of God*, *Mark* 1. 24. Acquaintance with God ariseth from likeness to him; when a man is, or endeavours to be holy, as he is holy. *Adam* was first made after Gods likeness, and then had communion with him: it implies friendship and familiarity; *Abraham* my friend: and, *shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I will do?* Now, there are frequent interviews betwixt God and the Soul: *I have set the Lord always before me, saith David*, *Psal.* 16. 8. as the Angels do, *Matth.* 18. 10. and God set *David* before his face for ever, *Psal.* 41. 12. Now God and the Soul face one another, as the Cherubims did, that were over the Mercy-Seat. If you know God to purpose, you will greatly desire to have secret, solemn, and comfortable converse with him. And if you have had it, and now want it, you will sigh, and wish with *Job*, *Job* 29. 2. *Oh that I were as in months past, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle, when the Almighty was with me.* Oh then, when we took sweet counsel together, as *David* and his familiar friend did, *Psal.* 55. 14. when I went with God to his house, as they did: and when he met with me in *Bethel*, and there spake with me. True Con-
verts they have frequent soliloquies or discourses with themselves about God, and much discourse in meditation and prayer with God, as *Isaac* had; he kept secret correspondence with God; he went out into the field to meditate, and to pray. And

2 Chron. 22.
Gen. 18.

Hos. 12. 4.

so Enoch is said to walk with God. If thou art as one of these, thou wilt go to thy Father in secret, Matth. 6. 6. and when thou art alone, God will joyn himself to thee, as Philip did to the Eunuch, Acts 8. God will allure thee into the wilderness, a lonely place, on purpose to speak to thy heart.

Secondly. This shews us, what a blessed state the conversion of a sinner brings him into: he that was a far off, is now brought nigh to God. Tho he be not taken up into the third Heavens, as Paul once was; yet his affections are taken up thither: and his conversation is there; he is ravished, as Solomon was, when he said, Will God indeed dwell with men? This was amazing to Solomon, and so it is to every true Convert; I will dwell in them, and waalk in them, and they shall be my people, and I will be their God. The original is very emphatical, ἐν αὐτοῖς ἐνοικήσω. I will indwell in them; there are two In's, as if God could never have enough communion with them. God doth not onely dwell with a gracious Soul, but in him: he is the Temple of God, 2 Cor. 6. 16. As the Priests and Levites had rooms in the Temple, and were alwayes imployd there; so is God in a sanctified Soul, he takes up rooms there, and is always busying himself there: Behold, I dwell with him that is of an humble and a contrite spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. There he communicates his secrets; Psal. 25. 14. there he writes his Law; Heb. 8. 10. there he sheds abroad his love, Rom. 5. 5. He acquaints such a Soul with much of his mind, which he hides from others: Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. A servant knoweth not what his Lord doth; but ye are my friends, and all things that I have received of my father, I have made known to you. As Christ is in the bosom of the Father; so may the servants of Christ lean on his bosome, as John did. A godly mans acquaintance with God, gives him boldness and confidence toward him: his heart dares safely trust in him, Prov. 31. 11. he dares trust God further than he sees him. Whoso walketh in darkness and seeth no light, let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God. Yea, when God seems to forsake him, Job 13. 15. Tho he slay me, yet will I trust in him. He knows God by his name Elshadai, God All-sufficient, Gen. 17. 1. and by his name Jehovah; he can cry, Abba father: he can say, still hope in God, he is the health of my

counte-

2 Cor. 12.

Phil. 3. 1.

Isa. 57. 15.

Matth. 11. 25.

John 15. 15.

John 1. 18.

1 John 3. 21.

Phil. 9. 10.

countenance, and my God. He is acquainted with the power of God, the Wisdom, Truth, Goodness, and Mercy of God; he knows all these Attributes of God by experience; he knows God to be the father of mercies: he can say as *Paul*, *I was a blasphemer &c. Yet I obtained mercy*: He can say very sensibly where sin abounded, there grace aboundeth much more. But (as the Apostle said in another case) the time would fail me to tell you all the happiness which a good man hath by communion with God: as the Queen of Sheba said to Solomon, No man can tell you the one half of what the Scriptures, and his own experience speak. Communion with God, is called in the original, *κοινωνία*, which sometimes signifies, partnership; as if all things were common betwixt God and a good man. Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with the Son Jesus Christ. Psal. 42. 11.
1 Tim. 1. 73
Rom 5. 20.
1 King. 10. 7.
Jo: 1. 3.

As such a man gives himself to God; so God gives himself to him. As *Jonathan* stripped himself of his Robe, and gave it to *David*, and his Garments, even to his Sword, and his Bow, and his Girdle: so saith God, *O Israel, I am thy God*; thou returning Soul, I am thine, and all that I have is thine: my Power, and Wisdom, and Goodness, and Mercy, and Grace are thine. 2 Cor. 8. 5:

Thirdly, This also sheweth us the sad condition of natural men, whose acquaintance and converse is not with God, but with sinners like themselves, and with Satan; as *Eve* was in the fall. There are some who have converse with Satan, wittingly and willingly, as conjurers, forcerers, and witches; they converse with familiar spirits, as *Manasseh* did. There is such familiarity betwixt the Devil and this kind of men, as it extends to indentures and covenants; and against these, God made several penal Laws, even to Death. And all other natural men have real converse with Satan, tho' ignorantly: He is the spirit that worketh in all the children of disobedience. And the way he takes to correspondence with them, is as the Philistines dealt with *Sampson*; first to blind them, and then to make sport with them. *Satan* and Natural Men have fellowship in the works of Darkness. *Elimas* learned his mischievous subtilty of the Devil. As among evil company, one commonly leads another; and as regenerate men are led by the Spirit of God; As many as are led by the spirit of God, 2 King 21. 6.
Lev. 20. 27.
Eph. 2. 2.
Judges 6:

John 13. 2.
John 14. 17.
John 13. 27.

God, they are the sons of God : so natural men are led by the evil Spirit : they are of his company, and he hath his way of converse and familiarity with them ; they are said to be *led captive by him at his will* : he leads them by the nose. As the Spirit of God puts good motions into the Hearts of Saints ; so Satan puts evil motions into the hearts of sinners. He put it into the Heart of Judas to betray Christ. Yea, as the Spirit of God enters into good men ; *He is with you, and shall be in you* ; So the Devil into bad ; as he did into Judas.

Cant. 3.

1 Joh. 1. 2, 3.

John 15. 11.

John 16. 24.

Fourthly, This point serves to Exhortation. All you that have the work of Grace on your hearts, and are thereby taken into fellowship with God : Oh prize your Priviledg, and live in the enjoyment of it. If you have tasted how sweet the company of God is, you will not be content without it. The Spouse was restless, till she had met again with her Beloved, and then she was at rest. My Brethren, to live in Communion with God, is the only way you can take, that your joy may be full : *These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.* And what things were these ? *That ye also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the father, and with his son Jesus Christ.* And this joy Christ spake much of to his Disciples, *These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full.*

Quest. But how is the Joy of such men full ?

Psal 4. 7.

Ans. It is full in comparison with the joy we can have in the Creature. *Thou hast made my heart more gladd, by the light of thy countenance, than theirs whose corn and wine increase.* What is all the light of Candles and Torches, to the light of the Sun ? And it is full joy in respect of those Eclipses, which the Joy of many other Christians, who keep not up a constant course of Communion with God, doth frequently suffer. Oh, be daily conversing with Gods Attributes, as revealed in his word ; his word of command, and his word of Promise. And in his works ; his works in the World, and in the Church, and with immediate respect to your selves. And for this, be as much alone as you can. It was said of a serious Philosopher, that he conversed more with the gods, than with men. Every

ry Christian should endeavour, that this may be more truly said of himself, That he hath more to do with God, than Men; so had *Enoch*, who had the Testimony of the Holy Ghost, that he walked with God.

You that have callings, will hardly think this feasible; and indeed it will be no easie task. *Hagar* crowed over her Mistress; when *Abraham* gave her an Inch, she would have an Ell. And so your Worldly employments, if you are not careful, will jostle out your heavenly. But to these, the former must give the right hand of fellowship. Communion with God is that great business which must govern all other Affairs. This is the *Primum Mobile*, the highest Sphere that must overrule all the inferior; and if they follow not this, their motion will be errattick. Tho the things of the World may not interrupt your Communion with God; yet Communion with God may, and must intermingle with all other business: *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*

Genesis 16.

1 Cor. 10 37.

Remember these two things. *First*, That Prayer is a Duty, which maintains Communion with God; we grow familiar with God by Prayer, who appears much to a praying Person: He did so to Christ, when he was praying, he was transfigured. And God appeared to *Jacob* when he was praying, and so to *Moses*. Those that are serious praying Persons, cannot but have some experience of the Presence of God with them; especially, in secret Prayer. *Secondly*, Remember to love Jesus Christ much: For, saith he, *If any man love me, I will manifest my self to him, and my father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our abode with him.*

Luke 9. 20.

Genesis 32.

Joh. 14. 21, 23.

Quest. Why do many true Converts walk so much without the sight of God and Communion with him? God is as a stranger to them, as the Prophet speaks. Yea, sometimes as an enemy. And indeed, Gods deserting a gracious Soul, is as if he rained Hell from Heaven.

Jér. 14. 8.

Lam. 2. 5.

Ans. Gods ordinary withdrawals, are upon some failures on our part: *Your iniquities have separated between you and your God; and your sins have hid his face from you. I will go, and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and*

Isa. 59. 1.

Hof 5. 14. *seek my face.* Davids self-confidence, put God to withdraw from him; *In my prosperity I said, I shall never moved; thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.* So the Spouie, her security caused Christ to withdraw from her.

But Gods extraordinary withdrawals from holy men, are upon other accounts. As first, that they may in some measure be conformable to Jesus Christ, even in this point; they must taste of that cup which he drank of: *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Yet observe, That Christ questioned not his being the Son of God, in the depth of his desertion.

Secondly, God doth it to prove them, as he did *Israel*, to prove their Faith; that they can see by Faith, when not by sight; and to prove the Devil a liar, who tells God, that if he withdraws, they will withdraw, as in *Jobs* case.

But God is also present, when we know it not, as he was with *Jacob*: and as Jesus was with the two Disciples. If you have his gracious influence, you have his presence. *Did not our hearts burn within us*, say the Disciples that Christ conversed with? In a word, God withdraws sometimes from his people for a time, that he may fit them for more endearing and sweeter Communion with him, than ever they had before, as *Paul* said to *Philemon*, of *Onesimus*; *He perhaps departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever.* Truly so saith God, *For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercy will I gather thee.* God may hide his Face from thee, when his heart is towards thee, as *Joseph's* was towards his Brethren, when he spake roughly to them.

Consider and remember, that the more you live in Acquaintance and Communion with God, the less you will need the Creature; as the Sun comprehends the Light of all other Luminous Bodies. And so much for the second Particular, to which a Sinner in his Conversion is restored, viz. Communion with God.

C H A P. XVII.

Insisteth on the Third and Fourth Particulars, wherein a Convert returns to God, Viz: A due Subjection to him: and, A Spiritual Dominion over the Creature.

I Begin with the former of these, Subjection to God. And this is more than what *Adam* could bring himself to, in his first estate: he had but one command of tryal, yet could not bear that yoke. *Abraham* had two, and they both were harder than that given to *Adam*: God bad him get him out of his Countrey, and from his kindred, and from his Fathers house, he knew not whither. And he also commanded him to offer his Son *Isaac*, his onely Son, and Son of the promise, and he submitted to both. Gen. 12. 1.
Heb. 11. 8.
Gen. 22. 1.

Natural men cannot bear this yoke. When Christ gave that young man a command of tryal, *Matth. 19. 21. If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor; he went away sorrowful, because of his great possessions.* Men by nature, would have God to do nothing to them, but what suits with their own mind. The reliques of this remains in the regenerate; but grace doth much break them of it: *If the Lord say, he hath no pleasure in me; behold, here I am, let him do to me as seemeth good to him:* conversion doth not quite heal the sore of discontent at trying Providences. *Moses* would fain have gone over *Jordan*, to have seen the good Land; but God would not let him: *Let it suffice thee, saith God to him; speak no more to me of this matter, for thou shalt not go over this Jordan:* And *James*, and *John*, would fain have had fire from Heaven, upon those that carried it so basely towards *Jesus Christ*, *Luk. 9. 54.* And *Luther* said of *Melancthon*, that he would fain have been governing and ordering the world, and the affairs of Kingdoms and Churches: *Admonendus est Philippus, ut desinat mundum regere.* But grace makes head against

2 Sam. 15. 16.
Deut. 3. 24.
ver. 26.

gainst this corruption of nature: a regenerate man withstands himself, in this point, as *Paul* did *Peter*, in his dissimulation, *Gal. 2. 11.* Take him when he is himself, and he dares not struggle with the will of God: *I was dumb and opened not my mouth because thou didest it, Psal. 39. 9.* And tho he could wish it might be otherwise with himself, or with the Church; yet he learns

Matth. 26. 39.

of Christ to say, *Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.* A Regenerate man would captivate his own reason to the will of God. Natural reason is no competent surveyor of the ways of God. Tho God doth nothing against right reason, yet he doth many things above the best reason we are masters of: *My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways, my ways, saith the Lord.* Grace teacheth to submit, and not to dispute with God. When God smote *Aarons* two eldest Sons, the first in the Priests orders, *Aaron held his peace, Levit. 10. 3.*

Isa. 55. 8.

When *David* said, *Psal. 46. 8. Come, behold what desolation God hath made in the earth; what saith God? Be still, and know that I am God, v. 10.* It is the principle of regenerate men, and their practice also to their power, to have their minds conformable to Gods, and to resolve themselves into his will and Wisdom. We find *2 Sam. 3. 36.* that the people had such a high opinion of *Dauids* Wisdom and goodness, that it's said, *Whatsoever the King did, pleased the people.* So truly, Gods people know so much of his Wisdom and faithfulness to them, that they can readily justify him in his strangest works. *I know, in very faithfulness, thou hast afflicted me.* Tho a child of

Psa. 119. 75.

God may seek a better condition, than that he sometimes is in: yet he thinks not ill of God whilst he is in it. *David* thought it sad to be delivered up to the will of men; *2 Sam. 24.* but not so to be delivered up to the will of God, *Let us fall into the hands of the Lord, for his mercies are great; and let us not fall into the hands of men: especially wicked men, for their tender mercies are cruel, Prov. 12. 10. I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction, Zech. 1. 15.* When a man comes into a state of grace, he knows this truth, of which he was ignorant before, That he loseth nothing by yeelding to Gods will. Christ was no loser, when he yielded to his Fathers will; for God heard him as to what he feared. Tho he was not delivered from death, yet he was delivered from the fear of death,

Chap. 17. Parable of the Prodigal Son.

III

Death. So Saint *Paul* was not delivered from the thorn in the flesh; but he was from sinking under it: *my grace is sufficient for thee*. When *Job* justified God, and Judged himself for speaking against the way God had taken for his Tryal; then God made him a mends, and made his latter end better than his beginning.

Heb. 5. 7.

Cor. 2. 12.

Job 40. 42.

U S E. You then that are the Lords converts, let this gracious disposition abound in you more and more. The excellency of grace, lyeth in your subjection and submission to the good pleasure of God in trying Providences. Subjection even to God, goeth down hardly with the corrupt nature of man; as we see in our first Parents. Man would not be Lorded over: *who is Lord over us?* This *Leven*, was in *Corah* and his company: *ye take too much upon you*. And how did *Israel* chide with God himself about his trying Providences? Man is naturally a stout creature, and it is his hardest task to submit to God. But grace makes a man submissive and lowly; as *Christ* was. Grace abateth a man in his own eyes. Parts and priviledges pamper mans pride: *Paul* was prone to this by his Revelations. And *Hezekiah* by his miraculous deliverance. Knowledge puffeth up, that knowledge which is only a common gift: But grace doth the contrary: *Christ* who was full of grace, tho God, yet submitted himself to man; much more to God. Submit your selves to God; this is the way to be familiar with him: *To this man will I look, that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembles at my word*. When the Apostle to the *Hebrews* speaks of hard tryals, he bids Christians to be in subjection to the father of spirits. So was *Eli*; *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good*. And so was *David*; *It may be the Lord had him curse David*. And so was *Hezekiah*, when God threatned him, *good is the word of the Lord*. Man in his conversion delivers up himself to God not onely to do, but to suffer his will: he comes to God as a lost undone creature and layeth himself at the Feet of God: he putteth his mouth in the dust, as if he were afraid to speak one murmuring word of the hardest Providences of God towards him. This to the World may seem to be base; but it is a noble spirit, and hath a noble reward with God. It is the same spirit that was in *Christ*; and for this, God highly exalted him, and

Psal. 12. 4.

Num. 16. 3.

Num. 14. 27.

Matth. 11. 29.

2 Cor. 12. 8.

Chr. 2. 3. 2.

1 Cor. 8. 1.

Luke 2. 15.

Jam. 4. 7.

Isa. 66. 2.

Heb. 12.

1 Sam. 3. 18.

2 Sam. 16. 17.

2 Kings 20. 19.

Lam. 3. 29.

Phil. 2. 8.

v. 9.

Phil. 2. 6.
Zack. 13. 7.
Isa. 38. 8.

gave him a name above every name. Look upon Christ, till you be changed into the same Image. He was *equal with God*; God calls him *his fellow*: and yet he was willing to go back ten Degrees, as the Sun did. He that was in the form of God, took upon him the *form of a servant*, the lowest of men, and *became obedient to death, even the death of the Cross.*

Phil. 2. 8.

The *Arrians*, and *Socinians* upon this place, cavil much against the Divinity of Christ. But as *Calvin* said, All the Devils can never wrest this place so far as to take Christs Godhead from him. For who can think it no robbery to be equal with God, that is not God, and of the same essence with God? Yet Christ submitted to his Fathers will: *what shall I say? father, save me from this hour; may glorify thine own name.*

John 12. 27.

We shall never be put to such subjection and submission to the will of God, as Christ was; to go so many degrees back, as he did. And therefore we may well be contented to be, what God will have us be, and to be without what God will have us to be without. Gumble not that you must not eat of the forbidden Fruit. Believe it, that there is more reason in the will of God, than in our lusts. We must expect commands of tryal, and trying providences: and therefore take heed of the spirit of the first *Adam*; and covet earnestly the Spirit of the second, to let God have his pleasure on us. Christ had done *no violence, neither was there deceit in his mouth*: *yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and to put him to grief.*

Isa. 53. 8, 10:
1 Cor. 6. 17.
Rom. 8. 9:

Christs servants have one and the same spirit with Christ, *If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his.* They have the same spirit with Christ, tho not in the same measure: *for he hath not the spirit by measure.* But yet they have such a measure of the spirit, as to enable them to be in subjection to the pleasure of God: *He shall teach you all things.* And so much for the third particular, to which a convert is restored, viz. Subjection to God.

John 3. 34.

John 14. 26.

I come now to the 4th and last particular, and that is, Dominion over the Creature. This was *Adams* Priviledg in the day of his Creation: *Let us make man in our image, and after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the Sea, and over the fowle of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth.* And it was repeated afterwards. Now man recovers this Priviledg of Dominion, in his Conversion: *All things are yours: and you are*

joynt heirs with Christ; tho not joynt Purchasers, yet joynt Heirs. *Adams* dominion over the Creation, in his state of Innocency, was like the *Centurions*: *I say to this mango, and Matth. 8 9. he goeth; and to another, come, and he cometh; and to my servant, do this, and he doth it.* Man had all creatures in the Air, the Waters, and the Earth, at his beck. The relicts of this dominion is in man still; the Creatures stand in awe of him: *All are tamed by man.* But it was mightily impaired by *Jam. 3 7.* the fall: *Eve* was not afraid of the Serpent, as *Moses* was *Exod. 4 3.* when he fled from it. Yet doubtless, when a man is restored to the Image of God in holiness, God makes the creature more subject to him, as there is occasion, than to a natural man. He hath more dominion over the Creature, tho it be a more spiritual and mystical dominion than *Adams* was. Dogs that eat the flesh of *Jezabel*, licked the sores of *Lazarus*. The Sea that divided it self for *Moses* and *Israel*, covered *Pharaoh* and his Host. The fire that did not singe the cloaths of those three *Dan 5.* Servants of God, consumed the men that cast them into the fiery Furnace. The Lyons that brake the bones of those that accused *Daniel*, opened not their mouths against *Daniel.* *Dan. 6.* The Ravens that pickt out the eyes of rebellious Children, feed *Elijah.* *Pro. 30. 19.* Serpents stung the unbelieving *Israelites*; yet the *1 Kings 17.* Viper that fastened on *Pauls* hand did him no hurt. It's true, *Numb. 21.* the man of God was slain by a Lion; but it was because he *Acts 28.* had been disobedient to the command of God. It is observable what the Lord said to *Noah* that good man: *The fear of Gen. 9. 2. you, and the dread of you, shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, and upon every thing that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they deliverd:* the same priviledge that *Adam* had in innocency. Yea, the Servants of God have had more command of the creatures then *Adam* then had: they have had command over Coelestial bodies, as well as Terrestrial. *Joshua* commanded the Sun and Moon to stand still: *Elijah* both shut and *Joshua 10. 12.* opened Heaven: and commanded fire from Heaven: and at *James 5. 1.* *Hezekiah's* motion, *The Sun went back ten degrees.* *2 Kings 1. Isa. 38.*

But now the dominion that Christ hath purchased for his people, is a Spiritual and Mystical dominion.

And

Gen. 3.
 Luke 10. 17. And *First*, in a state of grace a man hath power and dominion over Devils, which *Adam* had not in his grant. The Devil subdued him by his first temptation. When the seventy Disciples returned, it was with joy, saying, *Lord, even the Devils are subject to us through thy name.* This was indeed as to bodily possession. But there is a power and dominion that every godly man hath over the Devil: *Ye have overcome the wicked one.* He that is begotten of God, *keepeth himself, that the wicked one toucheth him not*: He cannot hurt and harm him: *Touch not mine anointed.* We read of Christs touching, and that was a healing touch: and we read of the Devils touching, in *Jobs* case, and that was a hurtful touch: so it was at present; but in the issue, God made it healing, and to do *Job* good; as the skilful Apothecary makes a wholesom Treacle with the flesh of Vipers. The faith of a child of God will *quench the fiery darts of the Devil*; and his resistance puts the Devil to flight.

Eph. 6. 16.
 James 4. 5. The Life of grace lyeth much in conflicts with the Devil,

Luke 22.
 Zech. 3. 1.
 2 Cor 12. 8.
 Matth. 2.
 John 14. 30. and our own lusts: Satan *winnowed the Disciples*: and stood at *Joshua's* right hand; and sent his messenger to buffet *Paul*: But still he was worsted. The Devil is forced, at last, to leave a Saint, as he did *Jesus Christ*. He adventured on *Christ* himself, but to no purpose, it was to his own prejudice. And *Christ* hath endued his people with power over the prince of this World: *They overcome him by the blood of the Lamb.* Sinners in their conversion are *turned from the power of Satan unto God*: henceforth, the gates of hell shall not prevail against them. And the Apostle *John* gives the reason of this; *Because he that is in you, is greater than he that is in the World.*

Rev. 12. 11.
 Acts 26. 18.
 1 John 3. 4. When once a man returns to God, a stronger than Satan takes possession of him, and keeps garison in him: *We are kept by the power of God.* So that in this respect, the Saints have power over the Devil himself.

2 Pet. 1. 5.
 Rev. 1. 6.

Jam. 4. 6. *Secondly*, Men in a state of grace have dominion over sin. Grace hath such a dominion over sin, as altho it doth not drive sin out at once (no more than *Israel* could the *Canaanites*) yet it doth by degrees, as *Joshua* did them. There is more power in grace, than in sin: *The spirit that dwelleth in you, lusteth to envy, but he giveth more grace.*

Sin that dwelleth in the regenerate, may sometimes get the advantage of grace; as a weaker man may do of a stronger: but sin can never get the victory, so as to extirpate the habits of grace, as it did in *Adam*; one sin in him, destroyed all grace: as a *dead fly will corrupt a whole pot of precious ointment*. But Sin cannot now destroy Grace. *He that is born of God sinneth not, because his seed remaineth in him*. When the Saints seem to be subdued, yet they are *more than conquerors*. *Sin shall not have dominion over you. He will subdue our iniquities. I have kept my self, saith David, from mine iniquity.*

Eccles 10. 1.

1 John 3. 9.

Rom. 8. 37.

Rom. 6. 14.

Mich. 7. 19.

2 Sam. 22.

Rom. 7. 23.

Rom 7. 14.

1 Kings 21.

2 Cor. 15. 57

Sin may play the Tyrant in a good Man. *Paul* found it did so in him; but he will never own it for his Liege Lord. He may be sometimes a captive to Sin or Satan, but will never be a subject; he never serves sin freely and heartily, as natural men do. *Paul was sold under sin*; but *Ahab sold himself to work wickedness*. This is certain, that whatsoever present foils good men may have, this will be their triumph at last: *The strength of sin is the law: but thanks be to God, who hath given us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

U S E. This serves to exhort you, who are restored to this dominion, to put it into exercise; bear not this Sword in vain: if you have dominion over the Devil, then *give not place to the Devil*, as *Eve* did, when she did eat of the forbidden Fruit; and as *David* did, when the Devil provoked him to number the People: and as *Peter* did, when he dissuaded Christ from his Sufferings. But resist him. He not onely had a hand in the first sin, but hath in all sins. And therefore the lusts that men do, are called the Devils lusts. In every Temptation, say as Christ did, *get thee behind me, Satan*. Resist, and he will fly. Every denial is a discouragement to him. And tho he will on to a second temptation, when the first fails; and to a third; as when he assailed Christ himself: and altho he be gone at present, may be but for a season, to return with stronger assaults; yet you will be sure to worst him in the issue: *The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly*. The Apostle hath reference to the first Gospel Promise, *The seed of the woman shall break the serpents head*.

Eph. 4. 37.

Gen. 3. 6.

2 Chron 21. 1.

John 8.

Math. 16. 23.

Luke 4. 13.

Rom. 16. 20.

Gen. 3.

You see you have power; therefore use it. The Sword of the Spirit is a weapon which the Devil cannot secure himself against.

And use the power you have given you, against indwelling sin. You may keep your selves from your iniquity, as well as *David* did. Oh spare not *Agag*. Grace inherent, with assisting Grace, will enable you to overcome. There must be assisting grace to take away boasting: yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. And know that assisting grace is as certainly yours, if you look for it, as inherent. *My grace is sufficient for thee*. This concerns us, as well as *Paul*. Do not therefore be faint-hearted in bidding battel to any lust.

1 Cor 15. 19. Say not as *David* did of *Saul*, *I shall one day perish* by this or that corruption. You wrong Christ, and you wrong his grace in you, and with you, if you do. Art thou put at any time to cry out, as the Damsel when forced, or as *Paul* did, *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?* Be as ready to say as he, *I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord*. That is, for grace by him, which hath power over sin, and is contrary to all dispositions to it.

2 Cor 12. 20. 2 Sam. 27. Rom 7. 24.

A Christian is never overcome by any lust, but it is because he doth not improve the grace of Christ; not only grace received, but grace that would join with it, if sought for.

Thirdly, if you have dominion over the Creature, then let not the creature have dominion over your hearts. Be not slaves to those things, that you are made Lords over; tho not to command them into your hands, yet to command them out of your hearts, which must be for God, and not for another.

Hof 3. 3.

CHAP. XVIII.

Maketh the general Application from the whole precedent Doctrine.

I Shall now make Application of the whole. And first, this Doctrine of a Sinners return to God, may put every man upon enquiry whether he hath made this Return? which may be known by these following signs.

First, A sinner in his conversion to God makes much enquiry what he shall do for his poor Soul, and how he should be saved; and what he shall do for God, as well as himself. When those *Jews* were pricked in their hearts, they forthwith cry *Acts 2. 37.* out to *Peter* and the rest of the Apostles, *Men and brethren, what shall we do?* Before they would do nothing but what they listed; but now, any thing that God would have them, they would do. *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* saith *Acts 9. 6.* *Paul*, at his conversion. *Judas* and *Cain* were terrified, and *Felix* trembled, as well as those *Jews*. But they came not to this question, *what shall we do?* They came not to the poor trembling *Gaolers* question, *Sirs, what must I do to be saved?* *Acts 16. 30.* nor to *Pauls*, *Lord what wilt thou have me to do?* The terrors of wicked men are a Bridle to keep them from God: but the terrors of repenting sinners, are Spurs to drive them to him. Observe these three things in those poor Souls that were pricked at their heart:

First, They were taken off of self: alas, they knew not what in the world to do, they were beaten off of all shifting and shirking tricks and evasions, which sinners but too often use.

Secondly, They sat not down in fullen and slothful despair, as *Judas* did; but were solicitous what course to take: Oh, tell us what is to be done: *Lord what wilt thou have me to do?* And *Paul* did not dissemble, as the *Israelites* did; but he *Deut. 5. 27.* spake from his very Soul. Therefore when Christ bid him arise

Arise, and go into the City, and it should be told him what he should do ; he did so ; tho blind, he will be led.

Thirdly, They soon changed their thoughts of the Apostles: *Men and brethren, what shall we do ?* They hated and abhorred them before ; but now say they, *men and brethren*. And so the Gaoler of *Paul* and *Silas* : before his conversion, he used them as vagabonds, he whipped them, and set them in the Stocks. But when that work was wrought, then he saith, *Sirs, my Lords, what must I do to be saved ?* And so *Paul* once thought *Jesus* an Impostor, and a false Prophet ; but at his conversion, he saith, *Lord what wilt thou have me to do ?*

2ly, A Sinners Conversion brings in with it the Spirit of Prayer. This was the discovery the Lord himself gave of *Saul* his being a convert, *Behold he prays*. The Spirit of Grace, and the Spirit of Supplication, are poured out upon Sinners both together. This is of the first fruits of Conversion ; man in his natural Birth is born speechless : but he that is born of God, speaks as soon as he is born. And there may be much of the Spirit of Prayer, where there appears little of the gift, as when *Christ* made but short Prayers, and the same Petitions over and over. And so *Moses* never prayed more powerfully, than when he made those short Prayers, *Exod. 14*. The Spirit he'peth us to pray *with groans that cannot be uttered*. As God saith of his house, *My house shall be called an house of prayer* : So a state of Grace, is a state of Prayer. Even Promises themselves, must be prayed into performance. Every thing in a godly mans life is sanctified by Prayer : and therefore much of his time is taken up with it. *Christ* was much herein ; especially in secret Prayer ; we read of whole Nights which he spent in secret Prayer. Prayer is an Ordinance that keeps up Communion with God.

If friends be not often together, there grows strangeness. Praise is the great work of Saints in Heaven ; and Prayer is the great work of Saints on Earth ; especially secret Prayer. The hypocritical Pharisees in our Saviours time, prayed much openly, and made long Prayers, but without the Spirit of Prayer. But where Grace governs the heart, there will be much secret Prayer, the Spirit of Prayer begins to work in Conversion.

3ly, The greatest and kindest part of Repentance for sin, follows the Conversion of a Sinner. *Surely after I was turned, I repented.* That Woman we read of, *Luke 7.* had abundance of tears which followed the change of her heart. There is no such self-loathing and bewailing sin, as after evidence of pardon. There is a Spring of godly sorrow in every pardoned Sinner. *Ezek. 16. 36.*

4ly, If thou art converted, thou wilt be much admiring the Grace of God, as *Paul* was, *I was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious; yet I obtained mercy.* It is harder to make a Sinner a Saint, than to make another World; God meets with so much opposition in the work. And therefore it is a work that cannot but be admired. And besides, there may be many circumstances in thy Conversion, that may make thee wonder at it; That thy time should be the time of love, thy sinful time. *When thou wast in thy blood, I said unto thee, live; yea, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, live.* We are by nature children of wrath as well as others: but God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ. *By grace ye are saved.* And it may be, God hath left many in their natural state, who were, and are of a more unblameable Life than thou wast before thy Conversion: It may be God hath passed by many, of whom it may be said, as Christ said to that man, *Thou art not far from the kingdom of Heaven,* and hath seized upon thy heart, which was wicked and prophane. How can a man come into a new World, and a more excellent World, and not wonder? Such is the new Creature, in which *all things become new.* It is thus, even where Conversion is wrought with the least Observation, and with the stillest voice. Conversion makes as great a difference in a mans state, as Dissolution or Death; there is as great a difference between a state of Nature and Grace, as between Grace and Glory, if not a greater. Those are opposite or contrary; These but subordinate, and have only a gradual difference. *1 Tim. 1. 13. Eph. 2. 3, 4, 5. Mark 12. 34. 2 Cor. 5. 17.*

Secondly, This Doctrine is useful to Exhortation. When you have laid your condition to these marks, and can find none of them, or no footsteps of them, neither at present,
nor

Judges 11. 40. nor upon solemn search; then bewail and lament your selves, more than the Daughters of *Israel* did the Daughter of *Jephthah*. Do it so, as *Ephraim* did, when the Lord heard him, and was deeply affected therewith. *I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself.* Like that in *Acts* 7. 34. *I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people:* So is God affected with a Sinners bemoaning himself in his sinful state. Consider, as a forcible and encouraging motive to look after your Conversion, who they be that desire it, and who they be that are against it.

1st. God earnestly desires it: *Say unto them, to whom?* To those that said, *they should pine away in their sins;* and what should the Prophet say to them? *As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death, or damnation of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live:* Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O house of *Israel*? Observe that in *Job*, *He looketh upon men,* (observeth how they are affected with their sins and sinful state) *and if any say, I have sinned;* (as sensibly as that poor Publican did) *He will deliver his soul from going down to the pit* (into Hell) *and his life shall see the light; so, these things worketh God oftentimes with man.* And Jesus Christ is as desirous and longing after thy Conversion, and is grieved when men refuse him. O *Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thee, and thou wouldest not?* Tho such great Sinners, yet Christ would have had them come in to him. And in *Luke* 19. 41. It's said, *That he wept over Jerusalem, and said, If thou hadst known* (or, oh that thou hadst known) *even thou at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes.* It is the will of Sinners that undoeth them. This was the first; and the last *Discipline* of Christ, *Repent.* And the Spirit strives with the vilest of Sinners. *My Spirit shall not always strive with man;* but yet he would strive a hundred and twenty years. The Spirit in the Ministry of the Gospel preacheth to Sinners: *The spirit convinceth of sin.* The Spirit awakens sleepy Consciences, and doth many things towards a Sinners Conversion. And the unconverted are charged with *resisting the Holy Ghost.*

And

And the Holy Angels will be glad of thy Conversion: It is matter of joy to them, when you repent: *There is joy in the presence of the Angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth.* Luke 15. 10. How did they rejoyce, and congratulate the coming of Christ in our Nature, to be the Sinners Surety and Saviour? Luke 2. 14.

Thou dost not know how many destroying sins the Angels have stopt thee from; as the Angel did *Balaam*, in his attempts to curse *Israel*. As *Michael* the Archangel contended with the Devil about the Body of *Moses*; so doubtless, do the Angels of God with evil Angels, about Sinners in their return to God. Numb. 22. Jude 9.

And Saints both in Heaven, and on Earth, are for thy Conversion: *There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth*: This takes in God, and Angels, and Saints there. And Saints here make it much of their business to convert sinners, they would be glad of their company to Heaven. This we see in *David*; *Then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee.* Luke 15. 7. Psal. 51. 13.

Consider also who are against thy conversion: none but Devils, and their instruments. The Devil blinds the minds of men, lest the light of the knowledge of the glory of God should shine in to their hearts. The Devil hindered *Paul* from doing good amongst the *Thessalonians*. He that drew the first man, would draw all men into his own condemnation. And his Instruments are also like-minded. How did the *Pharisees* murmur that Christ conversed with sinners, and converted sinners? How angry and mad were the *Jews*, that the Gospel was Preached to the Gentiles? 2 Cor. 4. 4. 2 Tim. 2. 26. 2 Thes. 2. 18. 1 Tim. 3. Acts 13. 50.

Quest. But what can a sinner do towards his conversion?

Ans. More than he will do: it is true the power is Gods; but the act is Thine. It is not weakness, but wilfulness that hinders the conversion of sinners: *They will not frame their doings to turn to the Lord.* It is not because they cannot, but because they will not; *they refuse to return.* Hos. 4. 4. Jer. 8. 5.

Quest. But what shall I do?

Ans. When you are come to that in good earnest, as they were, Acts 2. 37. And the Gaoler, Acts 16. 30. And Saul, Acts 9. 6. You will not want instruction in the case. The spirit that sent *Philip* to joyn himself to the *Eunuch* to teach him, will do as much for thee when thou art sensible of thy lost condition, and enquirest after a remedy. Oh lye at the Pool side, lye under the ministry of the Gospel, which Preacheth repentance, and is a special means to give repentance, and is the word of reconciliation. Oh lye in the way where Jesus comes, as the blind men did, and so they were healed.

And pray to God to turn thee; *Turn thou me, and I shall be turned.* And doubt not whether thy Prayers shall be heard. Prayer was that which *Peter* put so great a sinner as *Simon-magus* upon; pray God, if perhaps the thoughts of thy heart may be forgiven thee. Oh be not discouraged because thy conversion depends on Gods Power, and not thine own; let not this hinder thy endeavours, in the use of instituted means, but rather provoke them. As *Paul* said of the Doctrine of Faith, *Do we then make void the law by faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the law.* So altho thy conversion is onely in the power of God; yet this makes not void thy endeavours in the use of means, but rather may quicken thee to it. It is better that the Power is in God, than in thy self; for if it were in thy self, so long as thou hast so base a will, thou wouldest miscarry. Oh let sinners attend upon the means of Conversion. Endure the terrors of the Law in your conscience, by presentiating all your sins to you, and damnation for them. Better the Law kill you, whilst there is a Gospel to cure you; than to stay till the Gospel cast you off as well as the Law. The Gospel damns sinners refusing mercy and grace, more deeply than the Law. *He that believeth not, shall be damned.* Now, saith Christ to *Jerusalem*, the things that belong to thy peace, are hid from thine eyes.

As full of metal as many sinners are now, even to *bless themselves in their sinful state*; they will be tamed, either by Conversion, or Confusion. Oh let not the thoughts of the power of a sinners conversion being alone in God, take you off of the means of conversion, and so make you sit to see if it will drop into your mouths.

When

When all the Corn in *Egypt*, was in *Josephs* Power, should a poor *Egyptian* say, I have no Corn, *Joseph* hath all in his keep; ing, therefore I will sit still and Starve? No; but, therefore I will go where it is to be had. And make you this Application. The Power of a Sinners Conversion is in God: What then? Shall I sit still and perish? No; but therefore I will go to God for it: *Turn thou me, and I shall be turned.*

Gen. 41.
Jer. 31. 18.

Obj. But still my Conversion depends on the Will of God, as well as his power: *If peradventure, God will give them repentance.*

2 Tim. 2. 25.

Ans. Consider that the Angels that sinned, have no encouragement; there is no possibility of their conversion, they are reserved in chains of everlasting darkness, to the Judgment of the great day. Those Lepers used the means to save their lives, upon a *peradventure*; and the *Ninivites* fasted and prayed, and repented, as well as they could, upon a *may be*: *Who knows if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger that we perish not?* And the *Jews* were exhorted to do so, upon a *who knows*. And the meek of the Earth are advised to seek *righteousness*, and seek *meekness* upon an *It may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lords anger.*

Jude 6.

2 Kings 7.

Jonah 3. 9.

Joel 2. 12, 13, 14.

Zeph 2. 3.

And consider, that thy Conversion is more likely, than of thousands and ten thousands that have not the means of Conversion. When the Lord sent *Paul* to preach at *Corinth*, he encouraged him with this, *I have much people in this city.* And there are thousands of instances where conversion hath followed, when the means of Conversion have been waited on. The greatest danger is in indulging the impediments; your Ignorance, and Self-flattery, and false Refuges: It was the *Prodigals* case a great while. Men are too well content to stay in their natural Condition; as *Reuben* and *Gad* were to stay on this side *Jordan*. The great sin of natural men is, that they hinder their own thorow Conviction; *They love darkness rather than light.* They resist the spirit. They cannot bear the searching of their sores; they cannot away with the sight and sense of sin and wrath in their Consciences. But remember,

Ag. 18. 10.

Numb. 32.

John 3. 19.

Ag. 7. 51.

There can be no sore searched without pain; and that this painful searching the Sore, is in order to being healed.

So much for this great point of a Sinners conversion, or return to God. *And he arose, and came to his father.*

C H A P. XIX.

After Explication of the next Part of the Parable, sheweth, That God takes special notice of a Sinners first beginning to return towards him. From the next Clause of the 20. Verse.

And when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him.

WE have done with the younger Sons part: We are now to enter upon the Fathers part, acted and managed in this famous Parable. A Parable which of all Parables our Lord Jesus spake, and the Holy Ghost hath commended to us in writing; is the most eminent, fullest of affection, and painted with the most pleasing colours.

Now in the transaction of the Fathers part, we have in general, The Prodigals gracious and affectionate entertainment.

First, By his Father alone, verse 20. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

Secondly, By the Family at his Fathers command, in ver. 22, 23. The father said unto his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and be merry. With the reason of this his solemn entertainment, in ver. 24. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.

First,

First, For his entertainment by his Father alone. *But when he was yet a great way off; his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, that is, to meet him.* What an indulgent Father is this? Oh how indulgent is God to returning Sinners, altho they have been very rebellious? It is spoken prophetically of Christ, *That when he ascended on high (to God the Father) he received gifts, even for the rebellious.* When he was yet a great way off: As it is said, *Christ came and preached peace to them that were afar off.* Psal. 68. 18.
Eph. 2. 17.

Quest. But how doth this agree with the former words? *And he arose, and came to his father.*

Ans. He was in a far countrey, when he first arose to come to his Father, as we saw before. And therefore it is said, *When he was yet a great way off.* Before he was come home, his Father saw him. The Greek word signifies, a seeing with attention, and with affection; his Eye affected his Heart, Lam. 3. 51.
John 1. 48. as *Jeremiah's* did. He saw him, as Jesus saw *Nathaniel* under the Figtree. Christ saw *Nathaniel* within, to the heart, and with the heart. And that the Father thus saw his returning Son with an affecting sight, is plain by what follows: *He saw him, and had compassion.* His passion did not vent it self against him, as *Saul's* did against *David*; 1 Sam. 19. but his compassion, as when the *Samaritan* saw the wounded Traveller; *when he saw him, he had compassion on him,* because Luke 10. he saw him wounded, and in his blood. So the Father saw his Son in a pitiful Garb without, and in a pitiful Case within; scarce any Cloathes on his back, or Shoes on his feet; his Cloathes were like *Joshua's* filthy rags. He saw him coming, Zech. 3. 1. weeping and sorrowing, as *Joseph* and *Mary* sought Jesus sorrowing. And as the returning Jews sought the Lord with Luke 2. 48. weeping: *And I heard Ephraim bemoaning himself.* Thus did Jer. 31. 9. the Father see his Prodigal Son coming, weeping, and sorrow. Jer. 31. 18. ing, and bemoaning himself for his Rebellion against his Father. And therefore, when he saw him, he had compassion, his Bowels were troubled for him. And further 'tis said, the Father *ran*, that is, to meet him. The Son goes; *I will arise, and go to my Father*; but the Father runs. God is before-hand with a Sinner, even a returning Sinner; if he come one step, God comes ten to meet him. Here

Isa 65. 25.

Here is eminently set forth to us Gods preventing grace: *Before they call, I will answer.* The sinner hath it not in his heart and thoughts to return to God, till God put it therein. If God must keep good thoughts in the hearts of Saints, then much more must he put good thoughts towards God into the hearts of sinners, if ever they have any. *I will take away the stone out of their flesh, and I will give them an heart of flesh.* And when he hath put good thoughts into a sinners mind, he must help them into action, and execution: *It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.* And when the sinner begins to go towards God, God runs to meet him at his first setting out. The Father ran, a sign of great affection; as we see in *Peters* and *Johns* running to Jesus his Sepulchre.

2 Cor 3. 5.

1 Chron. 19.

18.

Eze. 11. 19.

Phil. 2. 13.

John 20. 4.

Gen. 45. 15.

1 Sam. 30.

Luke 2. 48.

1 Kings 1. 6.

Exod. 2. 5.

Yet further, *He ran and fell on his neck*; as *Joseph* did on his Brethrens that had sold him into *Egypt*; he fell on their necks and wept, that is, for joy: and so did the Father of this prodigal. He fell not on his back with blows; but on his neck, with tears. His Father did not cry out of him, when he met him, and threaten, and revile him, as *Saul* did *Jonathan*: *Thou perverse rebellious Son.* Nay, he did not say so much to him, as Jesus his Mother said to him, *Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us?* But rather as it is said of *Dauids* carriage to *Adonijah*; *His father said not unto him at anytime, why hast thou done so?* No, the Father wept over him for joy, as *Joseph* over *Benjamin*. His heart melted over him, as *Pharaoh's* Daughter did over the Babe: the Child wept, and she wept; for it is said, *she had compassion on it.* So here, the Son weeps, and the Father weeps; the Father wept on the neck of his returned Son, after another sort than *David* over *Absolom*; but with as great affection; *O my son Absolom, my son Absolom! O Absolom my son, my son!* So the Father here, *O my Son! O my lost Son!* have I found thee again? *It is meet we should make merry,* saith he to his Servants, *for this my son was dead, and is alive again, was lost and is found.* He was even swallowed up with joy, that he found his lost Son; as the Spouse was, that she had found her lost beloved: *I have found him whom my soul loved.*

Cant. 3. 4.

Yet once more; it is added, *and kissed him*. And no question, but this was an evident sign of his reconciliation to his returning Son, as *Dauids* kissing *Absolom* was. And this was the great thing the poor returning prodigal looked for; It was the top of his desire, his Fathers favour, tho he should live with him in the meanest condition: *even as one of his hired servants*. *Benhadads* servants did not watch more for a word to fall from the King of *Israels* mouth, that might signify kindness to their master, than this poor prodigal did watch for some word, or some action from his Father, that might signify his reconciliation to him. Thus much for the opening of the words. I come now to the Doctrines.

But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him. From whence observe.

Doct. That God observes, and is much affected with the very first step which a sinner takes towards him. The prodigal did, but now rise up to leave this far Countrey, and come to his Father: and his Father is taken with it. That passage in *Job* answers to this: *He looketh upon men*, that is with a set observing look; as *Elisha* did on *Hazael*: *and if any say, I have sinned*; If God once hear a man lamenting his sins, not only as to himself, but as to God, as this returning sinner did, God hath his wish, this pleaseth him, this goes to his heart.

The beginnings of good in men are pleasing to God: How was he affected with that *some good thing* in the Son of *Jeroboam* towards the Lord God of *Israel*? *1 Kings 14. 13.* *1 Kings 14. 13.* In the Hebrew it is, *some good thoughts*. There is joy in Heaven at a sinners first conversion, at his beginning to act grace, and to live as a godly man; that his heart and his ways are faced about towards God. As the Angel said to *Daniel*, *At the beginning of thy supplication, the commandment came forth.* *Dan. 9. 23.* To clear the point, consider these three things.

1st. God loves the principle or first conception of grace in men, even before they come forth into any vigorous actings, as Jesus Christ did the buds of grace in those little children that he took up in his arms and blessed. God will bless the bud-dings of grace, according to that promise, *I will pour my blessing* *Mar. 10. 16.* *Isa. 44. 3.*

Psa. 126. 6. blessing upon thy buds : so the Geneva translation. We value the
 I Pet. 1. 23. filings of gold ; and so doth God his seed in men. The
 I John 3. 9. seed of God is precious and incorruptible seed : *His seed remain-*
 I Cor. 15. 36. *eth in him.* Gods love is set upon men in their infancy of grace :
 Hof. 11. 1. as he said of *Israel, When Israel was a child, I loved him.* A
 I John 2. 12. child is little, and knows little, and can do little : yet a Father
 loves his child then : and so doth God his : *I write unto you,*
little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name
sake.

Luc. 11. 1. The Disciples of Christ, in the infancy of their grace, were
 Marth. 9. 15. weak in prayer, and could not fast, could not understand well
 what Christ meant in many things ; they were but raw Scholars
 in the things of God : and yet Christ loved them ; and was
 John 15. 15. taken with them : *ye are my friends.* And he committed them
 John 17. 13. to his Father when he was to leave them.

Yea, a child hath folly and frowardness, and the mother bears
 it much : it abates not her love. And so have new converts ;
 poor sinners in their return to God have folly and frowardness
 in them, which God bears ; as he did with *Ephraim*, Isa. 57. 17.
 Isa. 57. 17. *He went on frowardly in the way of his heart ; I have seen his*
ways, and I will heal him. Many new converts will not suffer
 their wounds to be healed : But they must be more humbled
 and broken, they are not fit for mercy, nor fit for Christ.
 And many, they will not be comforted ; as it is said of *Ja-*
 Gen. 37. 35. *cob.* Their Souls refuse to be comforted, as the Psalmist did.
 Psal. 77. 2. They are as peevish with God, as *Jonah* was ; and yet still
 God bears it, and his affections are still towards them : God
 Jer. 15. 1. said to *Jeremiah* of the apostatizing *Jews*, *That his mind could*
not be towards them. But on the contrary, of these he saith, his
 Hof. 11. 8. mind cannot be taken off of them ; *How shall I give thee up,*
 Hof. 11. 9. *Ephraim ? I will not return to destroy Ephraim ;* for all his fro-
 wardness, for all I have so much ado with him. Where God
 hath once bestowed the least measure of Grace, his heart can
 never be utterly taken off from such a Soul : *The gifts and*
 Rom. 11. 29. *calling of God are without repentance.*

As is Gods displeasure at the beginning of sin, such and more
 is his content at the beginnings of grace. Now at the begin-
 ning of sin in man, God was wonderfully displeased ; death
 and condemnation entered into the world with sin, yea death
 and condemnation upon all, by the sin of one. So the very
 first

first act of Grace in man, pleaseth God much. The beginnings of Grace, the lowest measure of it, was the price of Blood, even *the blood of God*. Grace was Christs purchase, *Act. 20. 28.* as well as Glory.

Again, The very beginnings of Grace are the product of an Infinite Power; greater power than that which created the World; because it meets with great opposition. Grace is the product of such Power as raised Christ from the dead; which was *exceeding great and mighty power*. One single act of Grace, hath more Glory in it, than all the splendid actions of all the unregenerate men in the World. The seed of Grace, is Glory. As the Soul of one man, so one act of Grace, is more worth than all the World: yea, more Worlds than are in being. If a man should die immediately upon his first acting of Grace, he would yet be meet to be partaker of the Inheritance of the Saints in light. *Eph. 2. 19, 20. 2 Cor 3. 18. Matth. 16. 26. Col. 1. 12.*

The repenting Malefactor upon the Cross, was but a new convert before his Death, and but a few hours before; and he put forth but a few acts of Grace; and yet saith Jesus to him, *This day shalt thou be with me in paradise*. God delights in the first fruits of Grace, as they are an earnest of the whole life following: A state of Grace being such a Spring, as shall never be dried up. Tho at the beginning it be but as that little Cloud, like a mans hand; yet shall it encrease, till it drop down in fruitful Showers. *Luke 23. 43. John 4. 14. 1 King. 18. 44.*

In a Sinners first Conversion, God seeth the draught of his own Image and Likeness, as a man seeth his own proportion in a Child new born; There is a perfection of Parts, tho not of Degrees. As to Degrees, Grace is not in its full perfection; there is not that perfect man. St. Paul speaks of, *Eph. 4. 13.* But yet there is the perfect Draught. God seeth his Divine nature in a new convert; his Seed, which tho at first it be but small as a grain of Mustard; yet it will grow up to a great tree. Grace in the least of Saints, will be Glory. *Matth 13. 32.*

Application. First, This conduceth to the comfort and encouragement of those that begin to set their face towards God: remember, God hath a gracious Eye on your first setting out toward him, whilst you are but little, and can do little for God: *Little children, your sins are forgiven.* You can pray but little; *1 John 2. 12.*

Gen. 22. 12.
2 Chron. 6.

little, it may be you have ten sighs for one audible Expression ; yet God is taken with this, as Parents are with the broken Language of their Children. God values the offers at good, in his ; as he did in *Abraham*, and in *David*, tho their purposes came not into act, because God would not let them. Now I know thou fearest me, seeing thou hast not withheld thine only son, saith God to *Abraham*. And to *David*, Thou didst well, that it was in thine heart to build me an house. Jesus Christ prized the buds of Grace in his Disciples, tho like the buds of Roses, they had many Prickles about them, many Infirmities, Pride, Passion, Envy, Ignorance, Dulness, little Faith ; all these discovered themselves sometimes, and yet Christ loved their buds of Grace. Yea, there may be much Grace in a small action ; as there was a great gift in the Widows two mites, and holy Love in a Cup of cold Water to a Disciple. How did Christ honour the *Centurions* first act of Faith ? And that of the Woman of *Canaan* ? And the first acts of Repentance in *Mary Magdalen*, who had been such a noted Sinner ? Here therefore is encouragment for new Converts ; God takes notice of their first setting out towards him, of their beginnings to walk with him.

Luke 21. 3.
Matth. 10. 42
Matth. 8. 10.
Matth. 15. 28.
Luc 7.

Ezek 47.

Matth. 9. 16.
John 16. 12.
Mar. 2. 20.
John 16. 13.
1 Cor. 14. 22.

Col. 22.
2 Tim. 3. 15.

2. U S E, Secondly, Yet this conduceth also to caution, as well as comfort. God expects your little Grace should come to much ; that Grace should rise in you, as the Waters of the Sanctuary did. You must not always be Children in Grace, and in the exercise of Godliness. Tho Christ excused his Disciples for a time, as to hard Duties, and hard mysterious Truths ; yet he expected greater things from them, after his Ascension, and his sending of the Spirit. Brethren, saith the Apostle, *be not children in understanding, but be men* : in the Greek it is, *be ripe or perfect* : You should ripen in the Knowledge of the things of God, and the Mysteries of Christ, and of the Spirit : Aim at *all riches of the full assurance of understanding*. Timothy knew the Scriptures from a Child. But some Christians are always Children in this Knowledge.

Neither should you be always Children in your Affections and Passions towards the World, or towards one another. Remember what commendations the Apostle Paul gave many that he wrote to, and wrote of, *for their knowledge in the mysteries.*

mystries of Christ; and for their faith, and for their obedience, Rom. 1. 8. and for their love to the Saints. You should all of you seek for Rom. 16. 19. these attainments. Col 1. 4. 8

The Apostle much blamed many of the *Corinthians* for being babes in Christ, so long; *I have fed you with milk and not with meat; for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able, for ye are yet carnal: they discovered it by the broils, and divisions, and contentions that were among them.* 1 Cor. 3. 2, 3.

And so he blamed many of the believing *Hebrews*; they were *dull of hearing*; heavy hearted, as well as heavy headed. *Heb. 5. 12.* They were like narrow mouthed Vessels, that could receive in but slowly. Those were rebuking words of Jesus to *Philip*, John 14. 9. *Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? So much for this Doctrine.* Joh 14. 9.

C H A P. XX.

Wherein is shewed; the great pitty which God hath for repenting sinners. From the next Clause of the 20. Verse, And had compassion. — And that his mercy is beforehand with them. From the next following, And ran. —

From the first of these observe,

Doct. That God much pitieth new converts in their coming home to him. God treats not returning sinners harshly, as *Israel* did the *Gibionites* when they knew them to be such; they made them hewers of wood, and drawers of water. No, the Father melted as much as the Prodigal did. The *Scribes* and *Pharisees* expected, that Jesus Christ would have dealt roughly with the *Publicans* and sinners that came to him, and followed him: that he would have called them wicked, damned creatures, and bid them stand a far off; as they in *Isa. 65. 5.* *Joelua 9.*

Luc. 7.

Luc. 7. 39.

Isa. 42. 3.

Matt. 12. 20.

Matt. 18. 28.

Gen. 45. 42.

Psa. 7. 11.

Pro. 25. 26.

Eze. 16. 5.

Exod. 2. 6.

Gen. 3. 24.

Come not near me, for I am holier than thou. That Pharisee that bad Christ to dinner, when he saw the carriage of *Mary Magdalene* to Jesus; Oh, saith he, *surely if this man were a Prophet, he would have known what manner of woman this is that toucheth him; for she is a sinner*: a noted, a notorious sinner. But Christ pitied the poor soul that now came to him for pardon, tho she had been so noted a sinner. Christ would fulfil what was prophesied of him: *A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench.* When a poor sinner returns, tho he hath been never so notorious a sinner; yet God doth not by him, as that man did by his fellow-servant; *Lay hold on him: and catch him by the throat*: God saith not, how canst thou have the face to come to me, that hast been so vile and base in thy ways? And so long? That hast run away with my goods and spent them upon Harlots? but all this is forgotten, and God hath nothing in his heart but pity: as here the Father towards his Son, tho he had been a most profuse and debauched wretch. How compassionately did *Joseph* carry it towards his brethren? tho they had been so unnatural to him, yet his bowels were moved towards them; especially when they knew him to be *Joseph*, and that he heard them bewail it; that they had dealt so basely and cruelly with him: it is said, *he turned himself about, and wept.* Thus doth God carry it towards self-bewailing sinners in their return to him; his thoughts towards them are not angry and wrathful, but full of pity and compassion. God is angry with sinners, whilst they stand out and are sturdy, whilst they *set at nought his counsel, and will have none of his reproof*; he now *laughs at their calamity, and mocks when their fear cometh.*

But when a poor sinner is upon his return to God, and bewailing his long and sad distance from him, now Gods compassions are much raised.

Indeed God pitieth sinners before their conversion, when they *lye polluted in their blood, cast out into the open field, to the loathing of their persons, and no eye pities them.* Sinners do not pity one another; and Angels may not, till God distinguishes for them, who are *Elect Vessels.* Whilst men are out of Christ, Angels are their enemies: we see how the Cherubims with a drawn Sword, kept fallen man out of Paradise. But God hath a pitiful eye upon sinners in their natural state:

When

When thou wast polluted in thy blood, I said unto thee, live: God hath such compassion for the nature of man, that he pitieth man in his natural state: he is the Father of Mercies, upon this account. It is through Christ that he is so, but it is for poor miserable man that he is so. Ezek. 16. 6. 2 Cor. 1. 3.

God hath no mercy for sinning Angels, but for sinning man he hath. And why for sinning man, and not for sinning Angels? He gives the reason to Moses, and it is repeated by Paul: Because he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy. There are no sinners amongst men, but they have mercy offered to them; they have a call to repent, and to receive Christ, and salvation by him; and are assured, that whosoever believes in him, shall not perish, but have eternal life. Go, preach the Gospel to every creature. But not a sinning Angel hath a call to repent, or an offer of mercy by Jesus Christ. Exod. 33. 19. Rom. 9. 18. John 16. 16. Mark 16. 15.

It is said, that Davids soul went out after Absolom, even when he had sinned greatly. And so doth the Soul of God go out after the poor sinner, when he lieth in his blood: Go and tell them, As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but rather, that the wicked turn from his wicked ways, and live: Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? And if God pitieth sinners before, then how much in their conversion. As the returning spring, after winter, stirs up the humours in the body: so doth the returning of a sinner to God, after his long distance from him stir up the bowels of his compassion. God cannot refrain the sounding of his bowels, when he hears young converts bemoaning themselves as to their former sinful state. When the Lord heard Ephraim bemoaning himself, this went to his heart, O my bowels are troubled for him. God pities returning sinners in the pangs of the new birth. Ordinarily, a convert hath his share in the Spirit of Bondage; he is not without temptations to despair; the Spirit of Bondage precedes the Spirit of Adoption: Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of Adoption. Every returning sinner passeth by Mount Sinai, to Mount Tabor. No Israelite looked up to the brazen Serpent, that had not been stung with the fiery Serpents. A sinner knows the terrors of the Lord, before he knows his consolations in Christ. 2 Sam. 13. 39. Ezek. 33. 11. Jer. 31. 18. Rom. 8. 15. Numb. 21. 9.

Heb. 12. 21.

Acts 16. 30.

Acts 2. 37.

2 Cor. 5. 11.

Moses himself saith, *I exceedingly fear and quake.* And *Paul* had the Spirit of Bondage in his conversion, as well as the Goaler. And so had those *Jews* that were pricked at their heart. *We knowing the terrors of the Lord,* saith *Paul*: not by reading, or hearing only, but by feeling.

Matth. 13.

John 21. 21,
22.

Jude 9.

Matth. 11. 12.

Colos. 1. 13.

There is indeed a different measure of this Spirit of Bondage in repenting sinners, yet all have it in some measure; all see their lost condition in themselves; all have fears of God and of their Eternal condition. As our Saviour said of those hearts that are good ground, tho they are differently fruitful, yet in all there is some fruit. And if any will take the boldness to ask the reason of this difference, as *Peter* did about his own case, and *Johns*; his answer must be that given to *Peter*, *What is that to thee?* I say, there are pangs in the new birth; every convert hath the Spirit of Bondage; passeth out of *Egypt* into *Canaan*, through the wilderness: from a natural state, to a state of grace, through many soul straits and difficulties: therefore God doth pity sinners in their return to him. There is striving betwixt God and the Devil, about sinners in their conversion, as there was betwixt the Arch-Angel and the Devil, about *Moses* his body, and *Satan* is sure to lose his possession: and when he doth, he tears the poor soul as he comes out, as he did the body of that man *Mark* 1. 26. There is violence in a sinners conversion: *The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force*: God rescueth the sinner by force from the power of *Satan*.

There are strong motions in God towards a returning sinner, as well as there are in the sinner towards God. God is affected to see the tuggings that are betwixt flesh and spirit, at the first coming of the spirit into a man.

Application. *First*, This point speaks comfort and encouragement to poor returning Sinners. You groan and bewail your selves, and God pitieth you; *He is afflicted in your afflictions*, of this kind, above all. Your sighs for Sin go to his heart; your tugging with *Satan*, your conflicts with your own Corruptions, affect him much. If his Soul was grieved for the outward miseries of *Israel*, then much more for the troubles of your hearts. God knows that your Spirits are

Isa. 63. 9.

Judges 10. 16.

are tender: A bruised or a wounded spirit, who can bear? Prov. 18. 14.
 Are you still in the pangs of the new Birth? And is not the Spirit of Bondage yet quite cast out? Yet believe, that God is touched with your troubles: He cannot have a hard heart towards you, that hath wrought a tender heart in you. Re- Ezek. 11. 19.
 turning Sinners cannot say to God, as that Servant did to his Lord, *I knew that thou wast a hard man.* Thou canst not say, *I knew thou wast a hard God, and hadst no compassion for me* under the wounds of my Conscience, and the bruises of Spirit for Sin. No, my Brethren, God hath taken an order with one, to bind up your broken heart, and to heal your bruised Spirit: *The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor:* Glad tydings to the poor in Spirit, to self-judging, and self-despising Souls. *He hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, that is, for sin; to preach deliverance to the Captives;* such as that Daughter of Abraham was, whom Satan had bound eighteen years. God hath ordered Jesus Christ to proclaim the year of Jubilee to you; and therefore, tho you feel sharp pangs in your delivery, take heed of thinking that God doth not pity you; for his heart is turned within him for you. Luc. 4. 18.

When the people in the sense of their burdens applied themselves to King Rehoboam for some Relaxation, he answered them roughly, *I will add to your yoke; you have been chastised with whips, but I will chastise you with Scorpions.* But when poor Souls, that have the fire of the Spirit of Bondage burning in them, apply themselves to God for relief, God answers them with good and comfortable words, as he did the Angel: *Yet a little while, and he that shall come, will come,* that is, with comfort; and will not tarry. I King. 12. 14.

It is you that hinder your selves from comfort, and not he: You refuse to be comforted, as the Psalmist did. When Israel, under their hard task, applied themselves to Pharaoh, he gave them cold comfort: *Go, ye are idle, ye are idle.* But when God saw Israels sorrow: *I have seen,* saith he, *I have seen the affliction of my people;* They shall have comfort. *Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, speak comfortably to them.* Zech. 1. 13.
 Heb. 10. 37.
 Psal. 77. 2.
 Exod. 5. 17.
 Isa. 40. 1.

Secondly, This point, as the former, conduceth to caution, as well as comfort: Surfeit not on this sweet Gospel-Doctrine.

Ez. 8. 18.

It is to sinners returning to God, and that by the way of the Wilderneck, that this Cordial is given. *Cain* may be full of terrors of Soul, and God pities him not; because he doth but struggle with his terrors: He hath no thoughts, either of turning from sin, or to God; and such was the case of *Saul*, and *Pashur*, and *Judas*; and upon the like reason. Oh, let not such sinners think to be pitied of God, in their terrors of Conscience. If a sinner would be pitied of God, let him set his face towards him, and set his heart towards him; and then, tho the Lord see thee a great way off, he will have compassion; He will say to thee, *Ruamah, I will have mercy on thee.* And let sinners look for Pity and Compassion from God here: God hath no pity on sinners after this Life: All the outcries of a sinner in Hell, moves him not to any Compassion; *his eye shall not spare.* Oh whilst there is Mercy and Bowels in God for poor Sinners, return to him; if you do not, hereafter it will be too late. It may then be said to you, You might have had pity from God, but now he hath none for you. So much for this Doctrine.

I now proceed to the next, from that Clause, *And ran.* The Son goes: *I will arise, and go to my father.* The Father runs, takes ten steps for the Sons one: *He had compassion, and ran,* that is, to meet him. As God useth to meet him that *worketh righteousness.* Whence we have this Doctrine.

Ez. 11. 19, 20.

Doct. That God is before-hand with a returning Sinner. He knows Gods preventing Grace. There is no sinner returns to God, but he is beholding to God for the first motion in his heart to it: *I will put a new spirit within you, that you may walk in my ways.*

Matth. 26. 41.

1 Pet. 1. 5.

John 10. 29.

And when a Sinner is upon his return, God takes him by the arm, and teacheth him to go. When God hath taken away a mans wilfulness, and changed his will, and directed it towards himself; yet there is weakness remaining: When *the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak.* The stress of a sinners Salvation, even after Conversion, hangs upon Gods preventing and assisting Grace: *We are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.* Saith Christ, *My father is greater than all.* And God saveth through Faith; because Faith is that which leaneth on the Power of God, as the Ivy doth on the Oak. Trace a sinners

sinners salvation from first to last, and God is either alone, or chief in every step. His election is meerly upon the good pleasure of God, even without any respect to Christ as the cause or motive: much more, without any respect to good in a man, as some men would proudly fancy. Christ is the means of our salvation, but not the motive or reason of our Election. We are chosen in him, but not for him: God hath no motive in this, but his own good will.

Eph. 1. 5.

And when Jesus Christ, the sinners surety, redeemed him, the sinner was no agent: *I alone trod the winepress, and of the people there was none with me.* And the Spirit of God useth preventing grace and mercy before a sinners conversion, in the offers of grace: *Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters: Let the wicked forsake his way, and turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.* And God waiteth to be gracious to a sinner.

Isa. 63. 3.

Isa. 55. 1.

ver. 7.

Isa. 30. 18.

And though the use of means belongs to man; yet the efficacy of them is by the Spirit of God. God draws a sinner, else he comes not: *With loving-kindness have I drawn thee.* And in conversion, a man is the workmanship of God. God hath a first grace, that points a mans heart towards himself; and he hath a second grace, that brings a man home to himself. In the new creature, God takes care to prevent a miscarrying womb. Man would return back, after he is gone far towards a state of grace: as when the *Israelites* were at the borders of *Canaan*, they would have been returning back into *Egypt*. We do not read, that he who was not far from the Kingdom of God, ever came in: And he that lacked but one thing to be perfect, yet went back.

Jer. 3. 3.

Eph. 2. 10.

Mar. 12. 34.

Matth. 19. 21.

22.

And when a sinner at his conversion, is under the Spirit of Bondage, God prevents his despair, which otherwise he is apt to fall into; and thereby his utter ruine. As we see in *Cain*, and *Saul*, and *Judas*; yea, and *Adam* himself. It is in the nature of man to get furthest from God, when he hath most need of his mercy and grace. *Israel* died betwixt *Egypt* and *Canaan*, even in the wilderness: and so would a poor sinner perish and lose himself when he is on his way to God, if God did not help him therein, as the mother doth by the new-going child. So that when a sinner is come home to God, it may be said to him as to *Israel*; *Thou hast seen, how that the Lord thy*

Deut. 7. 31

God bare thee, as a man doth his son, in all the way that thou wentest, untill thou camest to this place.

Yea, man doth not only need Gods drawing before, and in conversion : *No man can come to me, except the father draw him.* But also when he is brought into a state of grace, he needs it now; *draw me, and we will run after thee.* Men of grace meet with many rubs in their way, even in their own hearts : *The flesh lusteth against the spirit, so that they cannot do the things that they would.* And they meet with cross winds without; so that they must have help to get safe to shore, as *Paul* had, and the passengers with him. Saints need a voice behind them, to keep them from turning to the right hand, or to the left. They have as great need of this, as *Israel* had of the Pillar to guide them in the wilderness. They have need of Gods preventing grace, to keep them from evil; as *David* had of *Abigails* counsel, to stop him in his bloody thoughts : *The Lord is faithful, who shall establish you, and keep you from evil.* And they have as much need of exciting grace to that which is good. *David* prayed much for this grace, *Quicken me, according to thy word : quicken us, and we will call on thy name.* So that God is beforehand with men, both before, in, and after their conversion.

A sinners seeking God, is the effect of Gods seeking him : *I am found of them that sought me not.* We read of Christs seeking sinners; but not of lost sinners seeking him. *Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you. We love him, because he first loved us.* What was *Paul* doing at his conversion? Seeking the Lord? no; he was persecuting him : *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* And what was the Gaoler doing at his conversion; pitying *Paul* and *Silas*? No, but whipping them, and putting them fast in the stocks. What was *Adam* doing, when God made the promise of Christ to him? was he seeking God? was he bewailing his sin? No, he was hiding himself from God, and studying excuses for his sin.

And after the Disciples were called by Christ to him, even then, without him, they could do nothing. When we are in a state of grace, we act as we are acted. Inherent grace doth nothing without assisting grace; no, not in a gracious thought. We need the spirit to help our infirmities in all workings of grace : *I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.* I live, yet not I,

but

but *Christ liveth in me.* God hath a greater hand in all our actings of grace, than the Devil hath in our sins. We should sin, tho there were no Devil to tempt us; but if God should not assist grace in us, it would not act: there is not enough power in inherent grace to act, without assisting grace joyn it self to it. God gives operations, as well as principles: *It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do:* Phil. 2. 13. Luc. 22. 61, 62. Peter wept not bitterly, till Jesus looked on him.

Now the Reason of this is. *First*, because Gods great design in his way of saving sinners, is to advance his free grace; he doth all *to the praise of the glory of his grace.* God hath no other reason of his love to us, but his own good will: he loveth us, because he loveth us: *He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy; and he will be gracious, to whom he will be gracious;* [this was his glory that he shewed *Moses.* And therefore the objects of his free-grace have usually been the greatest sinners; *Paul*, the chief of sinners; and *Manasseh* the nonsuch of sinners; and *Mary Magdalen* a grand sinner: And the *Publicans* and harlots entered into the Kingdom of Heaven, before the chief priests and elders of the people. Gods love and free-grace was the reason, why he gave Christ for us: *God so loved the world, that he gave his onely begotten son for us.* So that it is his good pleasure, and free grace, which he will have us to glory in: *He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.* When *Paul* speaks of his calling, he mentions free-grace over and over: *I, who was a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious, obtained mercy:* And, *The Grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant,* *ὑπερπελάνας*, hath superabounded, or run over.

Secondly, God takes this way in chusing, and calling, and saving sinners, to take man off from boasting. And God seeth need of this; for man is by nature a proud creature, he would be as God. Christ slighted the glory of the world when Satan shewed it to him as a temptation. But so did not *Adam* and *Eve*; when the Devil told them, if they would eat, they should be as Gods, they did eat, and that greedily. Man hath high towering thoughts of himself: *I thank God, I am not as other men.* *All these have I kept from my youth. I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing.*

There is a generation of men in every Age, I am sure in this, who lay out their time and parts to advance mans will and power, in his conversion and salvation, even from election to glory. Now the spirit fore-seeing this, the Scriptures are the more expresse in making God all in all in a sinners conversion and salvation: *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory.*

Psalm 115 1.

2 Sam. 14.

Neh. 2. 12.

Deut. 30. 6.

Exod. 16 6.

1 Chron. 29.
14.

Rom 8. 26.

2 Cor 3. 5.

John 15. 5.

Hos. 14 8.

Application. *First*, This informs us, That a convert must cry, grace, grace to every step he takes towards God, and to his very inclination to do it. As *David* said to the woman of *Te-koah*, *Is not the hand of Joab in all this?* So, the hand of God is in all this. God hath put it into thy heart to love him, and desire after him; as *Nehemiah* said, *What God had put in my heart.* The Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart to love him. Grace saves men at worst, and weakest: *When thou wast in thy blood I said unto thee, live.* Grace found *Manasseh*, dabling in innocent blood; and *Adam* hiding himself from God; and *Paul* persecuting the Saints. And when God hath given you a principle of good, you are beholding to him for the operations of that principle: *Of thine own, O Lord, have we given thee.* As all the good God doth to you, is of grace; so is all the good you do for him. There is a necessity for it. You cannot pray without it, except the spirit help your infirmities; you cannot have a gracious thought without it, you can neither act grace without it; *Without me you can do nothing*; nor grow in grace without it, *From me, is thy fruit found.*

Secondly, This shews us the folly of any man in a state of grace, that dares undertake any thing without assisting grace. Many new converts think they can go alone; they can pray, and reprove sin, and resist sin; and shake off temptation, and cast off the world, and even die for Christ: *Peter* was thus brisk; *Tho all men should be offended, yet will not I:* and, *though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee:* and yet none denied him so as *Peter* did. It is said of *Melancthon*, that when he first preached, he thought to have carried all before him; but alas, he found old *Adam*, too hard for young *Melancthon*. There are many new converts, through self-confidence, get such falls, that they never claw off all their life, but like *Mephibosheth*, carry their lame legs to their graves.

Satan is as much vexed at the new birth of a Convert, as Herod was at the Birth of Jesus, when he sought to slay him. It is said in the *Revelation*, that the *Dragon* stood before the Woman when she was ready to be delivered, to devour her Child as soon as it was born. Satan sets upon poor Souls whilst Grace is weak, and Experience wanting. He that beguiled *Eve* when she was perfect, and by the first Temptation that ever he used; how easily may he cheat beginners in the ways of God, being so long Practice and Experience. Therefore when God hath set you upon your feet in the way of godliness, let not loose your hold of his hand; be as afraid of it, as the Child is to let loose his Mothers. *Let him take hold of my strength*, saith the Lord. Remember you are not all Spirit, but Flesh also; as it is said of the Horses of *Egypt*. As yet there is more smoke, than flame in the Fire. Affections may be strong, and yet the Judgment be weak, as you see in the Disciples, who would have had Fire from Heaven to consume that Village that did not receive Christ. You may be much in outward Duty, and yet little in self-denial, and that inward Devotion which God only sees, if you look not to it. The Kite preys upon Chickens, when they are young, and so doth Satan upon young Converts. What had Christs Disciples done, if he had not been with them, and kept them for some time? *Whilst I was with them in the world, I kept them; and now I come to thee; father, do thou keep them.*

Oh, you that are newly come into the ways of God, be not puffed up at your change, tho it be a blessed change. You are come into a new World, a brave World, a Kingdom of Grace; but remember the danger *Paul* was in, when he had been taken up into the third Heavens. Oh walk humbly and dependingly upon the Grace of God. Look upon your selves as Vines, as tender Branches, that must have a leaning place. Use the Grace you have, to rest upon God for more.

Thirdly, This Doctrine may be of use, to Exhort us all to be better acquainted with Gods preventing Grace and Goodness. *David* knew it well: *The God of my mercy shall prevent me*: Shall be before-hand with me in deliverance; he shall be before my prayer, yea before my thoughts: *Before they call, I will answer; and whilst they are yet speaking, I will hear.*

- hear: I will prevent their Prayers. God doth so often: *Thou didst terrible things, that we looked not for; or glorious things. God sometimes surprizeth his People with great Mercies: When the Lord turned again the captivity of Sion, we were like them that dream. The Father was upon his Prodigal Son unexpectedly, and before he was aware. Whilst they are yet speaking, I will hear: we have plenty of instances. Whilst I was speaking in prayer, Gabriel informed me, and told me, At the beginning of thy supplication the commandment came forth. And chap. 10. 12. From the first day that thou didst set thy heart to understand, and to chasten thy self before God; thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words. Whilst Peter was speaking to the Gentiles, the Holy Ghost fell upon them. And that is an observable passage of Christ to the Disciples, I say not, that I will pray the father for you, for the father himself loveth you. As if he had said, My Mediation is not the Original cause of Gods Love to you; but Gods Love to you is the rise of my Mediation for you. And therefore it is that he doth his people good with his whole heart, and with his whole soul.*
- Isa. 64. 3.
Psal. 126. 1.
Dan. 9. 21, 22, 23.
Acts 10. 44.
Joh. 16. 26, 27.
Jer. 32. 41.

- Fourthly, Learn from hence, even you that have the most Grace, to live dependently upon Grace without you; that sufficient Grace which stood Paul instead when he was buffeted by Satan. Grace is a Creature, and as yet a weak Creature; like a King in a Cradle. And it hath strong adversaries. Therefore take hold on the strength of God; he bids you do it. But yet you must be using what Grace you have, or God will not assist you with his. It is not fit that God should work, and you sit still: you must be Labourers together with God. When the Spirit helps our Infirmities, he useth not his own strength alone, but in Conjunction with ours; as the word in the Original signifies. So much for the Doctrine, from those words, When he saw him yet a great way off, he ran:*
- Isa. 27. 5.
1 Cor. 3. 9.
Rom. 8. 26.

C H A P. XXI.

In which is manifested, The great desire that is in God to be reconciled to repenting Sinners. From the last part of the 20 Verse.

And fell on his neck, and kissed him.

THese were clear signs and tokens, that the Father was reconciled to his Son. Thus did *David* by *Absalom* when reconciled to him, *The king kissed Absalom*.

2 Sam. 14. 33.

4. *Doct.* And this holds forth to us, That God is most heartily desirous to be reconciled to returning Sinners. *Nehemiah* calls God, *A God ready to pardon*. It is his Nature, *Neh. 9. 17.* it is a thing that pleaseth him: *Mercy pleaseth him.* *Mic. 7. 18.*

There is an everlasting difference betwixt God and sinning Angels; but for man, as he presently made a breach betwixt God and him; so God presently provided to make up the breach. *Thou Lord, art ready to forgive*, saith *David*, in his Experience. In the Hebrew it is, *A God of propitiation*. *Moses* did but ask pardon for the Children of *Israel*, for a great sin, and that after God had pardoned them many a time, and God gave it presently. *Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people.* What was their iniquity? They chose *Egypt* rather than *Canaan*. *Pardon them according to the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt, even until now*; which had been very often. Now mark the answer of God: *And the Lord said, I have pardoned according to thy word*; that is, he would not at present cast them off. *Gen. 3. 15. Psal. 86. 5. Numb. 14. 19. 20. Verf. 1, 2, 3.*

For the further clearing of the point, consider these things. First, That God hath provided a meet Mediator, or middle Person, betwixt himself and lost man: He did it so soon as man had sinned against him. You know that eminent place; *Gen. 3.*

God.

2 Cor. 5. 19. *God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses to them.* God and Christ only had to do in this Reconciliation-work. Man had no hand in it; he goes from God; that was, and is his work. Christ is a meet person to interpose betwixt God and Man; because he is God and Man; he hath the Nature of both. And whereas the Apostle saith, *There is one mediator betwixt God and man, the man Christ Jesus*: He speaks not exclusively of his Divine Nature in the work of Mediation; but Emphatically of that Nature in which *he gave himself a ransom for us*, as it follows. He speaks of the nature in which Christ died to reconcile us to God: *If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.* And our Nature without his Godhead, could never have reconciled us to God. It is Christ, God-man, who is our Peace. And he goes an excellent way, in making our Peace: he lets not one Attribute of God wrong or prejudice another; he satisfieth the Justice of God, as well as procures Mercy for the Sinner. He was first *king of righteousness*, and so *king of peace*.

Christ takes the wrongs that Sinners have done to God, upon himself, as *Paul offered Philemon*, to take *Onesimus* his, by way of suretyship. One great end of Christ's Death, was to make reconciliation. *The Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself.* Why then? *To make Reconciliation*, to bring repenting Sinners into a state of Friendship with God. *Ye are my friends.* And our Friendship with God is made firmer by Christ than it was in the state of Innocency. For then God and Man fell out quickly; but now God is *long-suffering and slow to anger*. Christ is the Conservator of our Peace with God, as well as the maker of it; and this by being *our advocate with the Father*; *He appears continually in the presence of God for us.* As Princes and free States, have their Agents in foreign Courts, to preserve a good Correspondence; so Christ is our Agent in Heaven: *He appears in the presence of God for us.*

2 Cor. 5. 18. *Secondly*, God hath sent forth a word of Reconciliation to the World, a Proclamation of his mind this way, of his willingness to be at Peace with Sinners upon their return to him. God tells Sinners, he will be Friends with them. A wonderful thing:

thing! Will God indeed be friends with sinful man? As Solomon said, *Will God indeed dwell with men upon earth?*

2 Chron. 6. 18.

And the manner wherein God makes this gracious overture, makes it the more wonderful. For 1. he intreats men in the case: *As the God did beseech you by us. we pray you in Christs stead, be ye reconciled to God.* If a King should beseech a rebellious Subject to be friends, how would this amaze us? God doth so; the greater seeks to the less. *Abraham was the better man, and yet he sought to Lot for Peace, and that there might be no difference betwixt them: Let there be no strife, I pray thee, betwixt me and thee.* Such and much more, is Gods Condescension to us. And as it is an intreating word, so it is a promising word, and such as hath wonder in it. If the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my Statutes, and do that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live, he shall not die: All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: that is, neither to prejudice, nor so much as upbraid him. *In those days, and at that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none: and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found; for I will pardon those whom I reserve.* When? In those days, and at that time, *when I am pacified towards them.*

2 Cor. 5. 20.

Gen. 13. 8.

Eze 18. 21, 22.

Jer. 50. 20.

Ez. 16. 63.

Job heard not a word from God of his unadvised speeches, when God and he came together again, tho he had been guilty of many. But God justifies him before his Friends: *Ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath.* A reconciled Sinner is as if had not sinned; his sins are blotted out, as a debt discharged is crossed in the Book: *I, even I, am he, that blotteth out thy transgressions, for my own sake, and will not remember thy sins.* Blotting out the hand-writing of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross. And his sins are cast into the bottom of the sea, as Pharaoh and his Host were. It is said, they sank like Lead in the Sea. The casting of a great Stone, or Iron, or Lead, into the Sea, was anciently the Emblem of everlasting forgetfulness. When the Father of the Prodigal met him, he did not cast his disobedience and riotous living in his Teeth; but fell on his neck and

Job 42. ver. 7.

Isaiah 43. 25.

Col. 2. 14.

Mich. 7. 19.

Exod. 15. 10.

kissed him; as resolved to cast them away for ever out of his sight.

Third'y, God hath ordained Ministers of Reconciliation betwixt himself and sinners, even such are most suitable to our Nature and State; here; men like our selves, subject to the like passions; as the Apostle James saith of Elias. He hath given to us us the ministry of reconciliation, and he hath committed to us the word of reconciliation: To us, who the Apostles, yet men of like passion with you, as Paul said to the Priests of Jupiter, and the people.

It is a Mercy that God speaks not immediately, or himself to poor sinners: His Majesty would be terrible to them, as it was to Israel at the giving of the Law. They said to Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die. And it is a Mercy, that God makes not Angels his Ministers to poor sinners. For it consists not with the nature of Angels, to have such ordinary converse with men, as the Ministers of Christ must have. Sinners could not have that free access to Angels with their complaints and grievances, as they may have to men. God useth Angels in errands to some men; but it hath been but sometimes, and in extraordinary cases. But Gods ministers of Reconciliation are such as poor Souls may ordinarily converse with. And again, we are at a greater certainty in mens being Gods Ministers to us, than if Angels were; because men accompany and converse with us, and are known to us; they are flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone; as the Tribes of Israel said to David, when they made him King over them. But Satan can transform himself into an Angel of Light. As Christ in his Humane Nature was the great Gospel-Minister, and exercised his Ministry in calling poor Sinners, and making their Peace with God; so he hath sent men to be his Ministers to Preach himself to the World.

Christ Preached to Sinners in that Nature wherein he died for them; and when he was ascended on high, he gave gifts, not to Angels, but to Men, for the work of the Ministry. This is the most likely way to work upon them, and to bring them to God. The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren; unto him ye shall hearken:

ken. This way *Elihu* thought to work upon *Joh*: *Behold, I* Job 33. 6, 7. *am according to thy wish, I am also formed out of the clay.* And besides this, the weaker the Instruments are that are used in this great work, the greater Gods Glory will be. *We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power* 2 Cor. 4. 7. *may be of God, and not of us.* God is with the Mouths of Ministers, as with *Moses*; and in all Work done by them on the Sinners heart, we must say, Here hath been God and his Grace: *Not I, but the Grace of God which was with me.* 1 Cor. 15. 10.

Fourthly, Tho God hath not made use of Angels to be his ordinary Ministers of Reconciliation; yet when the Reconciler and Peace-maker came into the World, he made them his extraordinary Heralds to Solemnize the thing. *Suddenly there was with the Angel, a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, Glory be to God in the highest, and on earth Peace, Good-will towards men.* Some of the Fathers read it, Peace on Earth to men of good will, and so the *Rhem.* Translation. But *Maldonate* the Jesuit confesseth, That all the *Greek* Copies now in being, have it, Good will (that is, of God) unto man. And *Bellarmino* himself owns it, and so the *Greek* word, *εὐδοκία*, in *Luke*, signifies the Good-will of God towards men. Luke 2. 14.

And here we see, how glad the holy Angels are of Gods reconciling Sinners to himself by Jesus Christ.

Fifthly, Consider the persons to whom God is willing to be reconciled, not only Sinners, but the chief of Sinners; such a violent Persecutor and Blasphemer of Christ as *Paul* was. They were Publicans and Harlots, the most notorious Sinners, that Jesus often conversed with, and brought into the Kingdom of God. 1 Tim. 1. 13. *Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners to hear him.* God offers not Peace only to Sinners of fewer and lesser sins, but to Sinners of the greatest rank. *Come now, saith the Lord, and let us reason together:* (Now, that is, now ye are returning to me) *tho your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; tho they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.* Not that sin can change its colour; but the Sinner may, he may become a Saint, a man nigh to God, and in friendship with God, as *Abraham* was. The drift of the Expressions is to shew to men, that God is willing to

Matt. 21. 1, 31.

Isa. 1. 18.
Jam. 2. 23.

1 John 1. 7.
Jer. 3. 1.

be at peace with the greatest of sinners, upon the terms of repentance; and that the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. Take but one place more for this: *they say, (yea, the Law saith) Deut. 24. 4. If a man put away his wife, and she become another mans, shall he return to her again? (no, this is an abomination) But thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return to me, saith the Lord: God will not be limited by that law.*

Isa. 48. 11.
Mic. 6. 3.
Psal. 113.

Luke 19. 42.

Sixthly, Consider how God bewails, as it were, mens refusing peace with him: Israel would have none of me: O my people, what have I done to thee? wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me. How doth God humble himself, in reasoning with men why they will keep at a distance from him; he clears himself in the case, and all the guilt lies upon man. And so the Lord Jesus, weeping over Jerusalem: O that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. Christ seems to do as Phaltiel, he followed his Wife weeping when she left him.

Rom. 8. 7.

Rom. 1. 30.

Col. 1. 21.

Isa. 56. 4.
John 1. 29.

Seventhly, God by his Son Jesus Christ takes away and destroys the enmity that is in mans nature against him, and against peace and friendship with him. Every man by nature is not only a stranger to God, but hath enmity in him against God, is a hater of God. Now Christ, by his blood, slays this enmity in all the elect: he brings them into a way of complacency and dearest friendship with God. So that it is their property to choose the things that please God; as Christ said of himself, I do always the things that please my father: so every converted sinner can say, I would always do the things that please God: Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? saith Saul, as soon as ever he was converted. Now all these things laid together, shew the great desire that is in God, to be reconciled to returning sinners.

Eze. 33. 11.
Matth 23. 37.

Use. This should put us upon admiring the great affection of God to the salvation of sinners. He is not indifferent whether man be saved, or not: but he is earnest for their salvation. Why will ye die, O house of Israel? O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! how often would I have gathered thee, and thou wouldst not? Oh that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me,
and

and keep all my commandments, always, that it may be well with them, and with their children for ever? God is so affectionate in the case, that he seeks to sinners; he stoops to them: *As thou 2 Cor. 5. 20.*
God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christs stead, be ye re- 2 Sam. 7. 19.
conciled to God: This is not the manner of man: as David said
of God, in his own case. Doth a Father beseech a disobedient
Son, to be at peace with him, and to inherit his estate?
Or doth a Prince intreat a rebellious subject to be at peace with
him? No. God may say to sinners, I am God, and not man,
and therefore I can and do stoop thus to poor sinners. Observe
that in Isa. 27. Let him take hold of my strength, that he may
make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me. Gods
Strength and Power lies much in this, that he can pardon sin,
and be reconciled to sinners: Let the power of my Lord be great
according as thou hast said: The Lord is long suffering, and of Num. 14. 17.
great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression. This is the
strength of God a sinner should take hold of, to make peace
with him, that he can and will have mercy on whom he will Exod. 33. 19.
have mercy; and be gracious to whom he will be gracious. If a
sinner should lay hold on the strength of men and Angels, he
could not make peace with God: To which of the Saints wilt Job. 5. 1.
thou turn? To which of the Angels wilt thou turn,
turn thee toward God, take hold of his strength, of his power
to pardon sin, of his power to be merciful to sinners:
do this by faith, and this is the way to make peace with
God.

But then you must know, it is the humbled and self-judging sinner; the sinner that hath his face towards God, as this prodigal had towards his Father, that God gives leave to take hold of his strength, to make peace with him: if the presumptuous sinner, the sinner that abuseth Gods long-suffering, and mercy, and grace, shall offer to lay hold on Gods strength; God will knock off his sawcy fingers: *He will by no means clear the guilty.* And they are the guilty that say, *I shall have peace tho I walk in the imagination of my own heart.* But let the prodigal Son, that is come to himself, and would gladly come to his Father, let him do it and welcome. Deut. 29. 19.

There are other Uses of this point, but they will fall in with the handling of the next verse.

C H A P. XXII.

Sheweth, That Gods forgiving of sins, doth not for the future take away the Duty of Confession. From the 21st. Verse.

And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, &c.

I Opened these words before, in the 18. and 19. Verses, being the same here repeated. But there is one consideration to be had of them, which could not then be properly handled; but may fitly be done in this place. And that is, the time when the prodigal made this pathetick confession to his Father: not before, but after his Father fell upon his neck, and kissed him. Whence we have this Doctrine.

Doct. That there is place for the confession of sin, after God is reconciled to the sinner. When the prodigals Father had embraced him, and therein shewed his reconciliation to him; then the Son said, Father, I have sinned. The kindest part of repentance for sin, is after the sinner knows he is pardoned: *That thou may'st remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, that is, justify thy self as thou hast been used to do, because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee, for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God.* David was a frequent confessor, and bawler of his sin, after that Nathan had told him, *The Lord hath done away thy sin*: as we see in *Psal.* 51. and other of his penitential Psalms. We find Paul, when called to obtain mercy and grace, often confessed his pharisaical sins; *I am not meet to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God.* And so in *2 Tim.* 1. 13. And Jesus first gave Peter a gracious look, before he went out and wept bitterly.

Ezek. 16. 63.

1 Cor. 15. 9.

Luc. 22. 61,
62.

'Tis true, there is a legal preparatory Repentance before, and in order to conversion, and saving faith. And in this repentance, the soul may be sick of sin, as *Judas* was; and confess sin, as he did: *I have sinned, in that I have betrayed innocent blood.* And may vomit up sin; and yet return to it. *Matth 27. 4. 2 Pet. 2. 22.* A man may confess sin much, and be much troubled in conscience for it, and yet this be but the first conception of Repentance, and perhaps a false one, or such a one as miscarries. That pricking at the heart, as terrible as it was, in those *Jews*, *Acts 2. 37.* It was not perfect repentance. And therefore when hereupon they asked the Apostles, what they should do? *Peter* answered, Repent. Indeed this conception did not miscarry, but doubtless there are some sinners who have scorched consciences, some sparkles of Hell-fire therein, some drops of Gods wrath for sin, that makes them cry out of sin, and yet come not to saving repentance; all this may prove abortive.

Foul weather may make stones weep, but they are stones still. And therefore, so soon as the fire is out of the conscience, sin is little trouble to them. Legal sorrow for sin may break the heart, but not melt it, or change the frame of it. As a hammer will break Ice to pieces, but it is Ice still; it is the Sun that must melt it and thaw it into water: so it is the sense of the free and rich grace of the Gospel, that melts the heart of a sinner, and changeth it into a new heart. *Ezek. 11. 19.* Bare legal repenting of sin, doth but suspend the Acts of sin at present: for so soon as the pain is over, and terrors of conscience gone, a man is free to sin again. As a child, while the fire is in the Coals, will not meddle with them, but when the fire is out, then he will play with them, and dirty, and sully himself without any concern. But there is also a repenting of sin, and confession of sin, after conversion, and that a man is now come into a state of grace; and this is evangelical repentance, and confession of sin; being wrought and set a work by the sense and taste of the mercy and grace of the Gospel. Of this we read in the Prophet, *Surely after I was turned, I repented, Jer. 31. 19. and after I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh; I was ashamed, yea even confounded.*

The most holy and gracious persons, have most freely confessed the sins of their unregenerate state. *David* confessed the sins

Eph. 3. 8.

sins of his youth. And Paul confessed himself to have been the chief of sinners. Saints are never so humbled in the sense of sin, as when they are most sensible of the riches of the grace of God; *the goodness of God leads them to repentance*, Rom.

Isa. 6. 5.

2. 4. It hardens other men, but melts them. And their experimental knowledg hereof, makes them the more apprehensive of [the] vileness of sin that dwelleth in them Rom. 7. When *Isaiah* had seen the King, the Lord of Hosts, then he acknowledged himself *a man of unclean lips*, and cryed out, *wo is me*. And when *Job* had seen the Lord, then he abhorred himself, and repented in dust and ashes. So that the ingenuous

Job 42. 5, 16.

Zec. 12. 10.

Luc. 7. 17.

confession of sin, is the fruit of grace. *The Jews look not on him, whom they pierced, nor mourn over him, till the spirit of grace and supplications be poured upon them.* Much was forgiven that Woman, and she knew it, therefore she loved much, and she wept much.

2 Kings 8. 46.

The people of God sin as well as other men, tho not at the same rate, nor after the same manner. *If thy people sin against thee, (for there is no man that sinneth not):* It they bethink themselves, saying, *we have sinned, and have done perversly; then hear thou in heaven, and forgive thy people that have sinned against thee.* As the Apostle *John* saith, *If we say we have no sin, we deceive our selves:* so he saith, *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, to forgive us our sins,* 2 John. 1. 9, 10.

Luther hath this passage: *Before I saw into the point of the forgiveness of sins through Grace in Christ, I looked upon the very word repentance and confession of sin as terrible words; I did even hate them, and wished they had not been in the Bible: but after I understood by experience gospel-remission of sin, and gospel-righteousness; I then loved repentance, and was much in acknowledging my sins.* Oh, when a man considers, how God hath pardoned him, and spared him, when he was in the hands of justice, which might have damned him; this melts him, and makes him pour out confessions of Sin, and groans for it more than the eye can do tears. When *Saul* saw *David* had spared his Life, when it was in his power to have taken it away, he wept, and confessed, *my Son David, thou art more righteous than I:* All acts of grace that God shews to his Saints, do aggravate the vileness of sin in their sight. The excellency of grace being this, that it makes sin appear to be exceeding sinful, Rom. 7.

1 Sam. 24. 16

The

The sinfulness of sin is discerned only by Saints; a spot in Cambrick is far worse than in Sackloth; and a blur is seen more in a fine picture, than in unwrought wood. As no man hath a right Knowledge of God, till he be in the Covenant of Grace: *Then they shall all know me from the greatest to the least.* So no man hath a right knowledge of the vileness and sinfulness of sin, till he be in a state of Grace and of Peace with God. It is the light of Grace that plainly discovers the Holiness of God, and the vileness of Sin. Jer. 31. 34.
Zech. 12. 10.
Roin. 7.

For the further opening of the Doctrine, Consider the Properties of Confession in a state of Grace and Reconciliation to God. It is free, and full, and feeling, with self-abasing, self-confusion, and self-loathing.

First, It is free and ingenuous, from a Principle within. *Pharoah* was forced to confess his sins, and so was *Saul*. The nature of man, since the fall, is to hide and cover his sins; 1 Sam. 15. which is Gods work, and not mans. *If I covered my sin, as Adam, by hiding mine iniquity in my bosom.* But Grace disposeth men to confess, and lay open, and aggravate their sins: *Job 31. 33. Lord, I have sinned greatly in that I have done. And Lord, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly.* 2 Sam. 24. 10.
Verse 17.

How did *Ezra*, and *Nehemiah*, and *Daniel*, abound in the confession of sin, their own as well as the peoples? *We, we, we,* have done so and so. Not that they think, God doth not know their sins, till they acknowledg them. *Lord, thou knowest my foolishness, and my sins are not hid from thee.* Yea they know, that God knows their sins better than themselves. *Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; see if there be any wicked way in me.* But they confess sin to give Glory to God; so that they confess sin freely, from a principle of Grace. Psal 69. 5.
Psal. 139. 23.

Secondly, It is full; they confess all they know, and implicitly, those they know not. *Lord, who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret sins.* They confess small as well as great sins. *Dauids* heart smote him, for cutting off *Sauls* Skirt. Whatsoever is sin, they charge themselves with it; yea, they often charge themselves with that they do but fear to be sinful. Their Infirmities and humane Frailties go to their hearts, and affect, and afflict them. The Spouse confessed her indisposition, and dulness; *I sleep, but my heart waketh.* Psal. 19. 12:
1 Sam. 24.
Cant. 5. 2.

Isa. 63. 17.
Rom. 7. 24.

Thirdly, They confess sinfeelingly, with great complaints and bemoaning of themselves: *Lord, why are our hearts hardened from thy fear? O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me!* The Soul of a godly man is in an Agony in the Confession of sin, as Christs was in suffering for it; the Soul is melted, as that Womans was, in Luke 7.

1 Cor. 15. 9.

Fourthly, It is done with self-abating, as here in the Text: *Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight; and am no more worthy to be called thy son.* And so Paul, *I am not meet to be called an Apostle; because I persecuted the Church of God.* They do it with self-confusion, they are ashamed to look God in the face: *That thou mayest remember and be confounded, because of thy shame, for all that thou hast done, when I am pacified towards thee, saith the Lord.* Bad men sin, and are not ashamed; and they confess sin without shame and self-confusion: *Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? Nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither can they blush.* When men are in the dark, they do not blush; but when they come to the light, it makes them do it: So when men are enlighten'd by the Grace of God, then they are ashamed and blush at their sins, they confess to God, *We lye down in our shame, and our confusion covereth us; for we have sinned against the Lord our God.*

Ezek. 16. 63.

Jer. 6. 15.

Jer. 3. 25.

Ezek 36. 31.

Fifthly, They do it with self-loathing, and sin-loathing; self, as well as sin; as a man after a Surfeit, sometimes doth not only loath the meat, but the very dish out of which he did eat it. This property is a Promise of the Covenant of Grace: *Then shall ye remember your own evil ways and doings that have not been good, and shall loath your selves in your own sight, for your iniquities.* When is this? *When the Lord hath given them a new heart, and put his spirit within them, and sprinkled clean water upon them, and saved them from all their uncleanneses.*

Ezek. 36. 25.

Pom. 7. 16.

Application. *First*, This informs us, and may settle us in this truth; That the confession of sin is the duty of the best of Saints. They are not without sin, sin dwells in them, as it did in holy Paul; and will in all Saints, whilst they are in the body; and therefore confession of sin must be a standing duty, and last as long. As long as the Body gathers ill humors,

mors, it will need vomits and purges, or some other Evacuation.

Tho God have promised not to mention their sins to them that return to him; and we see an evidence for it, in the Fathers carriage to his returning Prodigal Son; yet we must not omit to mention them. *If we confess our sins:* I John, as well as you. *If thy people sin against thee (for there is no man that sinneth not) and thou be angry with them; if they shall bethink themselves, and make supplication, saying, We have sinned and done perversly;* then hear thou their prayer. — Ez. 18. 22. I John 1. 9. I Kings 8. 46. 47.

Saints are to pray for pardon of sin; and therefore to confess sin. Our Lord Jesus appoints even his Disciples to pray for the pardon of sin. And therefore they greatly err, that say, Saints need not Repentance for sin, nor confession of sin. If God repent himself of their punishment, then they should not think it below them to confess the sins for which it was due. Some say, God seeth no sin in his people. But why then was God so angry with *Moses*? And why did he so severely punish *Eli*, and *David*? And why did Christ so threaten the Angel of the Church of *Ephesus*? Numb. 23. 21. Exod. 4. 14. I Sam. 3. 13. 2 Sam. 12. 10, 11.

If Scripture-Saints were here to answer these men, they would do it with indignation; and since they are not, let their practice do it. The best of the godly know that they have need to confess sin, and to mourn for it; hereby to keep a sense of the sinfulness of sin upon their hearts, and to keep the sense of the pardon of sin in their Conscience, and to keep them humble, and to preserve them from Self exalting, and to shew them their need of Christ, and what debts he hath paid for them. And let me urge you to such a Confession of sin as I have described by these considerations. Rev. 2. 5. Psal. 51. 16, 17. Psal. 102. 17.

First, You will prevent Gods Sentence against you, by your own: *If we judge our selves, we shall not be judged.* By this Confession of sin, we stand before God in the breach, that he destroy us not. I Cor. 11. 31. Psal. 106. 23.

Secondly, Confession of sin glorifies God. Tho it do not satisfy his Justice, yet it glorifies his Justice, and his other Attributes. *My son, confess thy sin, and give Glory to God.* It glorifieth his Justice in punishing sin, and his Mercy in pardoning sin, and his Power in pardoning great sins. Jos. 7. 19.

Psal. 32. 3.

Thirdly, Gods people do ease their Souls of a great deal of pain, by an ignuious Confession of their sins: *When I kept silence, my bones waxed old.* By such a Confession of sin, they cast up the evil that offends their Conscience. Whilst the arrow-head sticks in the wound, incurable. Pains and Passions are allayed by utterance, and giving them vent; much more the wounds of Conscience, by plucking out the sting of sin in Confession.

Rev. 12. 10.

Fourthly, By such confession of sin we shame and disappoint the Devil. The Serpent taught our first Parents to excuse their sin, but not to confess it. The Devil makes this his work, he would confess our sins for us, he is *the Accuser of the Brethren.* Now if we apply our selves to this necessary duty, as we should do, we put him out of this Office. We had better take shame to our selves for our sins, here, before a gracious God; than be shamed with them before Men, and Angels, and Devils, and a Holy and Righteous God, hereafter; one of these must be. If the Apostles present troubles made them a Spectacle to the World; surely then mens confessed and unpardoned sins, will much more do it; will make them a Spectacle to the World, to God, to Angels, and to Men.

1 Cor. 4. 9.

Fifthly, The best tryal of our Religion, is a Reflection on our selves, accusing and judging our selves; these are the things that argue a *spirit in you without guile*, which is the moiety, or one half of your blessedness. Your very thoughts of confessing and bewailing sin before God, are pleasing to him: *I said, I will confess my transgression to the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my son.*

Psal. 32. 2.

Psal. 32. 5.

C H A P. XXIII.

Giveth the Explication of the 22. and 23. Verses following. And thence sheweth, That both Heaven and Earth are rejoyced at the Conversion of a Sinner. And that God deals not with humble Sinners according to their unworthiness.

WE have done with the meeting, and greeting of the Father, and his repenting Son. In the 22, and 23. ver. following, We have the Son's as observable entertainment.

But the Father said unto the Servants, Bring forth the best Robe, and put it on him, and put a Ring on his hand, and Shoes on his feet. And bring hither the fatted Calf, and kill it, and let us eat, and be merry. Verse 22.
Verse 23.

The Son had confessed, That he was not worthy to be so called; but his Father treats him as God did Ephraim, that is, as his dear Son, and as a pleasant Child. God deals not with the humbled, self-judging, and self-abasing Sinners, after their deserts; but in his way of free-Grace. Jer. 31. 20.
Psal. 103. 10.

The Father said unto his Servants: Who are they?

First, We are not to exclude the Holy Angels; who, as they were employed in rejoycing at Christ's coming into the World to save lost Sinners, Luke 2. 14. So they have the same employment, when Sinners are converted unto God. There is joy in the presence of the Angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

But primarily, The Servants of God here, are the Ministers of the Gospel, to whom is committed the Word and Ministry of Reconciliation. Christ employs them, as he did himself in his Ministry, *To heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, to set at liberty them that are bruised, so preach the acceptable year of the Lord.* 2 Cor. 5. 18.
Luke 4. 18.

Bring

Bring forth the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. The poor prodigal was grown ragged and bare when he came from his far country; he had neither cloaths on his back, nor Shoes on his feet.

Gen. 3. 7.

Adam and Eves nakedness after they had sinned, shews that every man is so, in his natural condition, naked and bare:

Ez. 16. 4, 5.

Thou wast not swaddled at all, in the day that thou wast born. When Israel was to come out of Egypt, it seems they were but bare in clothes; and therefore God ordered them to borrow

Exod. 12. 35.

of the Egyptians. This was the prodigals case, when he came forth of his far country. It was with him, as it was with the Jews High Priest when he came out of captivity, he had on him filthy garments: so that the Lord commanded those that stood before him to take away his filthy garments.

Zach. 3. 3.

And to the High Priest himself, he said, *Behold I have caused thine iniquities to pass from thee, and I will cloath thee with change of Raiment.* And thus said the Lord to Israel his new-born child, *I spread my skirts over thee, and covered thy nakedness.* This

Ezk. 16. 8.

spreading the skirts over one, was also a nuptial or marriage right: therefore Ruth said to Boaz, *spread thy skirt over thy handmaid, for thou art a near kinsman.*

Ruth 3. 9.

When God had promised Christ to our first parents, then he provided cloaths also for them. They had but Fig-leaves before; but after they had cloaths of Gods own making. So here, when the Father had shewed himself reconciled to his returning Son, he takes care to cloath him. To cover his sins as he did Joshua's: *Behold, I have caused thine iniquities to pass from thee: and to adorn him with grace; and I will cloathe thee with change of Raiment.* So that this best Robe, sets out the

Rom. 13. 14.

Gal. 3. 27.

righteousness of Christ, both imputed, and imparted to us. *Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.* And as many as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. Christ is both a Sinners satisfaction, or righteousness, and his sanctification. *Who, of God, is made unto us, righteousness and sanctification.* Christs righteousness upon a repenting sinner, is like Jacobs elder brothers Garments on him: *See, the smell of my son, is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed.*

1 Cor. 1. 30.

Gen. 27. 27.

And put a ring on his hand. Some Expositors say, this sets out the sealing of the Spirit, after a man believes: *In whom, after ye believed, ye were sealed with the holy spirit of promise.*

Ephe. 1. 13.

But

But if this be part of the meaning of these expressions, yet it is not all. Amongst the *Romans*, a ring was a sign of lost liberty recovered: and so here it was with the lost Son; he recovered the sonship he had forfeited, as himself confessed, *I am no more worthy to be called thy son.*

And moreover this putting of a Ring on his hand, may import the riches of grace that God sheweth to returning sinners: *in whom we have the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace wherein he hath abounded towards us.* And it may also import, the honour that God doth to sinners, when they become Saints. Thus when *Pharaoh* would honour *Joseph*, he gave him his own Ring. And so did the King, when he honoured *Mordecai*. And, *This honour*, saith the Psalmist, *have all his saints.* Ephes. 1. 7, 8.
Gen. 41. 42.
Esth. 8. 2.
Psa 149. 9.

And put shoes on his feet. He was barefoot, it seems, when he came out of his far country. It was not with him, as with the children of *Israel* those forty years in the wilderness: *Thy shoes are not waxed old on thy feet.* Here we see, the Father cloathes his returning Son, from top to toe. Whether this signifieth, that piece of Armour, in Eph. 6. 15. *Having your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace*; I cannot determine; but we shall, I hope, see more clearly into it, when we come to the particular points in the words. Deut. 29. 5,

And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat, and be merry. Here was a strange difference betwixt the prodigals fare in the far country, and at his Fathers house: there, he fed with the swine he tended; nay, *Would have been glad of the husks that the swine did eat.* But here, *the fatted calf* is killed for him. He thought onely of bread in his Fathers house, and he thought his Fathers servants happy, that had enough of that. But he had not only bread, when he came home to his Father, not onely ordinary food, but dainties, *the fatted Calf.* Some say, it signifieth Christ, or the Lamb slain for sinners: *Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world: the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.* And it is true also, that God gives us Christ to eat. And Christ himself gives us his flesh to eat, as meat indeed, *John 6. 55.* ver. 15, 16.
John 1. 29.
Rev. 13. 8.

This is certain, It was to heighten his returning Sons entertainment; he had the best provision made for him: as the Lord provided for *Israel* in the wilderness, he fed them with *Manna*, *Exod. 16. 15.*

Pfal. 78 25. *with bread from heaven, with Angels food.* God entertains a returning sinner with dainties, with *hidden manna*; with *meat* John 4. 32. *that the world knoweth not of*, as Jesus said to his disciples, in his own case.

Thus much for the opening of the words, thus far. Now before we come to the particular Points, couched in the several parabolical expressions; I shall speak to the Doctrine arising from the general scope of these words.

Dost. That there is joy in Heaven, and on earth too, at the conversion of a sinner.

For as it is said here by the Father at the return of his lost Son, *let us eat and be merry*: So, in that parable of the lost sheep, it is said, *That joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.* And in that of the lost piece of silver, that there is joy in the presence of the Angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth.

In opening and confirming this Doctrine, I shall shew you,

First. That there is joy in Heaven, and on Earth, at the conversion of sinners.

Secondly, Why it is so.

Thirdly. Wherein it is declared.

First, That there is joy in Heaven, and on Earth, at the conversion of a sinner. And 1. God rejoiceth at it; even all the Persons of the Godhead. We find that God was *refreshed* with his works of creation; *On the seventh day he rested*, that is, from his works of creation, *and was refreshed*: much more is God refreshed with the new creature; because it is a more excellent piece of work than the old: as it is said of the new Covenant, that it is a *better Covenant*.

Exod. 31. 17.

Heb. 8. 6.

Gen. 45. 27.
28.

The Father of the prodigal Son represents the joy of God the Father, at the conversion of a sinner. *It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad; for this thy brother was dead and is alive again.* v. 32. as Jacob was revived, when he heard that Joseph was alive; *It is enough, Joseph my son is yet alive.* So doth God rejoice and is refreshed, when he sees a man that hath been dead in sin, brought to life. But why is it so?

I. Resj.

1. *Reas.* Because God now sees his own nature in a man again, his own likeness and image: He may call a convert, *His own* Philem. 12.
bowels, as Paul did *Onesimus* God hath respect to him, and Iſa. 65. 2.
dwells with him, within his heart; he delights in that place, Iſa. 57. 15.
next to heaven. And God converseth with him; accounts him
his friend; as he did *Abraham*, and speaks mouth to mouth Iſa. 41. 8.
with him as with *Moses*: he is a man after Gods own heart, Exod. 34.
as he said of *David*, Acts 13. 22.

2. Because a convert is a useful man to God. In a favourable acceptation he is; for strictly God hath no need of Saints, or Angels. *If thou beest righteous, what givest thou him?* But Job 35. 7.
God is pleased to esteem him a useful man: he sets such a one Pſal. 4. 3.
a part for himself: he is amongst the *first fruits of his creatures*. Jam. 1. 18.
A convert is a man of self-denial, he is all for God: *Lord*, Act. 9. 6.
what wilt thou have me to do? Like *Abrahams* servant, that Gen. 24.
was more careful of his Masters business, than of himself; he would dispatch his business before he would eat a bit of bread. He is a man of that spirit and temper, that he would have sin out of the world, as well as out of himself; and therefore is grieved at the wickedness of men; *I beheld* Pſal. 119. 158.
the transgressors, and was grieved. *Lots* righteous soul was 2 Pet. 2. 8.
vexed from day to day with the unlawful deeds of the Sodomites.

Secondly, Jesus Christ rejoyceth at the conversion of sinners: They are *the sons of men, with whom are his de-* Prov. 8. 31.
lights.

Reas. And the reason of it is, because in them he seeth the travel of his soul: *He shall see the travel of his soul, and shall* Iſa. 53. 11.
be satisfied. A woman hath not so great joy to see a man-child born into the world, tho that is very great, as Christ is Joh. 16. 22.
to see a sinner born again. We find how he gloried in that Luke 7.
converted woman that had been a notorious sinner: she is supposed to be *Mary Magdalen*: *seest thou this woman?* Saith Christ ver. 44.
to *Simon*: what a changed woman is shee! how she loves me, more than ever she loved her lusts!

Thirdly. The Holy Ghost rejoyceth at the conversion of sinners: As the spirit may be grieved by men, so he may
Y be

be comforted by men: and so he is by a converted sinner.

1. *Reas.* Because he is the Handy-work of the spirit, he is his creature, his curious piece. Grace hath a far greater excellency than gifts have. The Spirit gives gifts to natural men; but he gives grace to none but true converts. Every one of these may say as *David, I am fearfully and wonderfully made*: he is changed into the Image of the Lord, by the spirit.

Psa. 139. 14.

2 Cor. 3. 8.

2. The Holy Ghost hath now another new house to reside in. *Ye know the spirit*, saith Christ to his Disciples, *for he dwelleth with you, and shall be with you.*

John 14. 17.

Fourthly. The holy Angels rejoyce at the conversion of a sinner: *There is joy in the presence of the Angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth.* The Angels shouted for joy, to see the Power and Wisdom of God in the creation, they admired the works of Gods hands. Much more do they shout for joy at his new creature. The Angels were so far from envy that Christ should take on him the nature of man, and not their nature, that they did most gloriously celebrate the thing: *Glory be to God in the highest, peace on earth, good will towards men.* And why should Angels rejoyce at the conversion of a sinner?

Luke 15. 10.

Job 38. 7.

Luke 2. 14.

Reas. First, Because their employment for God is increased. Angels bless God for their employment, and it is much of their employment to be *ministering spirits to minister for them that shall be heirs of salvation*, Heb. 1. 14.

Psal. 103. 20.

2. Because every converted sinner adds to their communion. *We are come to an innumerable company of Angels.* As the Devil is familiar with wicked men. We read of those that had to do with *familiar spirits*, as *Saul*, and *Manasseh*, and many others: so, in some respects, even now, Angels are a Saints familiars, they have *charge over them*; and *pitch their tents round about them*; and *minister to them*. Jesus Christ hath made Angels great friends to his people.

Psal. 91. 11.

Psal. 34. 7.

Heb. 1. 14.

Fifthly. The Saints here rejoyce at the conversion of sinners. You may well conceive, that *Paul* was extream glad at the

con-

Conversion of *Onesimus*. And to the Church at *Thessalonica*, Phil. 1. 2.
 faith he, *Ye are our glory and joy.* We may observe this also 1 Thes. 2. 20.
 in *David*, *Come ye children, hearken unto me, I will teach you*
the fear of the Lord. And then will I teach transgressors Psal. 34. 11.
thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee. How glad
 was *Barnabas*, when he saw the Grace of God in those that
 believed? Psal. 51. 13.
Acts 11. 23.

Reas. And the reason of this is, because this is a thing that
 not only Ministers, but Saints look much after. There is
 not a godly man, but if he do his duty, and act like himself,
 but he much desires the Conversion of Sinners. He would
 have others as well as himself, *to taste how gracious the Lord*
is.—Brethren, faith *Paul* to the *Romans*, *my hearts desire* Rom. 10. 1.
and prayer to God for Israel is, that they may be saved. And
 to *Agrippa*, *I would to God, that not only thou, but all that* Acts 26. 29.
hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am,
except these bonds.—And this is that which every Saint
 prays for much, that the Kingdom of God may encrease and
 flourish, and this Christ hath taught us to do. Matth. 6. 10.

Quest. But Thirdly, Wherein is this Joy at a Sinners Conversion declared?

Ans. God declares it in his calling on Sinners to repent.
 God now commands all men every where to repent. And in his Acts 17. 30.
 ready and affectionate receiving and embracing returning
 Sinners. When the father saw his son coming afar off, he had
 compassion and ran, and fell on his neck and kissed him. And
 God commends new converts to Saints to receive them, and
 deal tenderly with them; as he did *Saul* to *Ananias*. Be- Acts 9. 11.
 hold, he prayeth, and he is a chosen Vessel. And he commends
 them to Angels to be tender and careful of them. Angels Psal. 91. 11.
 ministered to Christ after his temptations. And an Angel from Matth. 4. 11.
 heaven strengthened Christ in his Agony. And God appoints Luke 22. 43.
 them to Minister to all those who are the Heirs of Salvati-
 on. And Christ he delights to hear them pray; a work which
 they fall upon presently upon their Conversion. Behold, he
 prayeth, faith Christ of *Saul*. Let me hear thy voice, for sweet Acts 9. 17.
 is thy voice. The strong motions of new converts towards 2 Cor. 12.
 Gods,

God, and the pantings of their Souls after him, do much affect him. *I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself; this moved the bowels of God, Jer. 31. 18, 20.*

Use. 1. This informs us of the malignity of their minds, who are vexed at the Conversion of Sinners. As the *Scribes and Pharisees* were at those Publicans and Sinners that entred into the Kingdom of God; they murmured when they flocked after Christ to hear him. How full of wrath were the *Jews* against *Paul*, when he believed? They sought his life immediately upon it. Men of this temper are not of God, but of the Devil: God rejoiceth at the Conversion of Sinners, and the Devil is vexed at it; it is part of his torment; he was enraged at *Paul*, when a Convert, then he buffeted him, and hindred him again and again, in his work. And there are a Generation of men, that follow the Devil herein; they are vexed when a Sinner becomes a Saint; *They think it strange, that he runs not with them to the same excess of riot.* How did the Rulers twit that man that had been blind, and was become a Disciple of Jesus?

Acts 9. 29.
2 Cor. 12. 7.
1 Thess. 2. 18.
1 Pet. 4. 4.
John 9. 28.

2. This informs us of what great esteem they are with God, whether Ministers or other Persons, who are instruments of the Conversion of Sinners. *He that winneth souls, is wise. And they that turn many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars for ever and ever.* A man that puts himself upon this work, God calls him a messenger, one of a thousand. He is a worker together with God. *He that converteth a sinner, saveth a soul; he is a Saviour.* All this sheweth the high esteem that the Lord hath of Instruments in this excellent work. What then, are the Instruments of a Sinner's Damnation? That strengthen the hands of evil doers? That shut up the kingdom of Heaven against men? That will neither enter into the Kingdom of Heaven themselves, nor suffer them that are entering to go in? Doubtless, such will have double Damnation. *Their blood will I require at thine hand.* It will be thus with those that do not warn Sinners. And how much forer will their Damnation be, that harden Sinners?

Prov. 11. 30.
Dan. 12. 3.
Job 33. 23.
1 Cor. 3. 9.
James 5. 20.
Jer. 23. 14.
Matth. 23. 13.
Jer. 17. 18.
Ezek. 3. 18.

3. This informs us, what a grief and trouble impenitent Sinners are to God: *Forty years long have I been grieved with this generation. It is a people that do err, in their hearts. Wherefore,*

Psal. 95. 10.

fore, I swear in my wrath, that they should not enter into my rest. Observe Gods Expostulation with those Jew, that refused to return. *Why will ye die, O house of Israel? Why will ye be damned?* And it is said, That Jesus was angry and grieved at the blindness, and hardness of the hearts of the Jews. And how did he weep over Jerusalem for their wilfulness? Ez. 33. 11.
Mark 3. 5.
Luke 19. 41.

And it is said of some in *Isaiah*, That they vexed Gods Holy Spirit. And in Chap. 43. God saith, they made him to serve with their sins, and wearied him with their Iniquities. In ver. 22. He told them, that they had been weary of him; and here, that they had wearied him. So saith the Prophet, *It is a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God* Isa. 43. 24.
Isa. 7. 13.
also?

Oh, let me tell such men, that it repenteth God that he hath made such wilful, unperswadable Creatures as you are. Gen. 6. 5, 16.
As when God saw the wickedness and wilfulness of the old World, it repented him that he had made man on the Earth, and it grieved him at his heart. O! wo to men, when God repents he hath made them, or done them good: For now, God is about to destroy them, and to take all that is good away from them. When God repented that he had made *Saul King*, he then rejected him from being King over *Israel*. 1 Sam. 15. 26.

4. This serves for Exhortation to all Converts, to such Sinners as are made Saints, and brought into a state of Grace. Did God rejoyce in your Conversion? Oh fulfil you his Joy. Take heed you turn not his joy into sorrow again. God is grieved at your follies, as well as at your miseries. His people grieved him in the desert, with their discontent at his Providences and unbelief of his promises. You grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by corrupt Communication one with another. You trouble God with your inconstancy in that which is good, in the performance of your Duty he hath commanded you to him. If, and to others. *O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it passeth away.* Phil. 2. 2.
Psal. 78. 40.
Eph. 4. 30.
Hos. 6. 4.

Oh! that God should rejoyce in you at your Conversion, and you so often grieve and trouble him afterwards! Oh! let us endeavour to keep such a frame of Spirit, and to walk so, as that he may call us, as he did *Sion, Hebrzibah, my delight is* Isa. 62. 4.

in you. Thus much for the first general Doctrine from the words.

I now come to the second General Doctrine, from the same 22, and 23. Verse. *But the Father said to his servants, bring forth the best Robe, and put it on him, &c.* In the former verse, it is said, *The Son said to his Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.* But saith the Father to his Servants, *Bring forth the best Robe, and put it on him.* Whence we may observe,

Doct. That God deals not with humbled Sinners, according to their confessed sinfulness and unworthiness; but after his free-Grace. The Father doth not upbraid his Son with his Debaucheries abroad, he doth not threaten him with Justice for them; but he takes care to comfort and encourage him: doth by him, as Jesus did by *Mary Magdalen* at her repentance: He tells her not, what a noted Sinner she had been, and what a leud Woman; but he deals gently with her, as Luke 7. 37. with a bruised reed: *Thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace.* Vers. 48, 50. Indeed when Sinners continue wilful after the repeated offers of Grace, then he upbraids them, as he did those Cities Matth. 11. 20. where he wrought many Miracles, and often preached, and yet they received him not, nor believed, nor repented. But when Sinners repent and humble themselves, as this Prodigal Son did, then he passeth by the mention of their former evil courtes, and encourageth them in their good beginnings. Ez. 18. 22. *All his transgressions shall not be mentioned to him.*

Reas. And the reason why God carries it thus to returning Sinners, is *First*, Because God will commend his free-Grace to men, in their Calling and Conversion, as well as in their Election. As God neither looks at good or evil in men, when he chuseth them: so also their Calling is of free-Grace: *The children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God, according to election, might stand, not of works but of him that calleth.* Gods love to Sinners is independent, as his love to Israel was: He loveth them, because he will love them. His *indoxia*, his Good-will, is the ground of all the good he doth them. Observe what the Apostle Paul

Paul saith, We our selves were sometimes foolish, disobedient, Tit. 3. 4, 5. serving diverse lusts and pleasures. But after the kindness and love of God, our Saviour, towards man, appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy, he saved us. Mercy is Gods rule in dealing with repenting Sinners, and not their merit. He answers them not according to their former follies, but he acts his own rich Grace towards them, in all wisdom and prudence.

Eph. 1. 7.

Secondly, God carries it so tenderly towards confessing and returning Sinners, because he would not discourage them. He knows they have suffered more or less, under the Spirit of Bondage; and therefore saith, as Paul to the Corinthians, of 2 Cor. 2. 6. the dejected Incestuous Person; sufficient to such a man is the sorrow and heart-breaking he hath had already, and now let him be comforted, lest perhaps he should be swallowed up of Matth 12. 20. over-much sorrow.

Christ will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. If he should deal roughly with self-abasing, and self judging Sinners; he knows their little Grace would not be able to master their Temptations. A little Coal that hath but a few sparks of fire in it, if it be hard blown, it is soon put out; but if gently dealt with, it will encrease at length to a flame. So a little Grace, that is but as a grain of Mustard; if it be discouraged, it will be crushed; but if gently used, it will encrease and grow to a Tree.

Use. This is for encouragement to such as are under the pangs of the new Birth; whilst they are bewailing their past sins, and judging themselves, God is taking care for their comfort and encouragement. As he did for Jerusalem. Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith the Lord; speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her iniquity is pardoned: do not Whisper it, but make Proclamation of it: Thus when the Prodigal was judging himself for his past sinful life; I am no more worthy to be called thy son: His Father calls upon his Servants to prepare comfort for him. God humbles himself to the weakness of a repenting Sinner, as a Mother doth to her weak Child; he thinks not much of it to be patient, and to be silent, as to their former evil ways. God deals with repenting and self-bemoaning Sinners, according to their state,

Isa. 40. 1, 2.

Psal. 113. 4.

state, and his own nature : they are weak and tender branches, and he handles them gently ; and he hath provided such a Christ for such tender hearts, who dealt with young Disciples *as they were able to bear*. God hath appointed Christ, *To seek that which is lost, and to fetch again that which was driven away ; and to bind up and strengthen that which was broken and sick, to binde up the broken hearted ; to gather the lambs in his arms, and to carry them in his bosome ; and to guide those that are with young.*

Mark 4. 33.
Eze. 34. 16.
Luke 19. 10.
Luc. 4. 18.
Isa. 40. 11.

Isa. 35. 8.
ver. 5, 6.

Isa. 40. 4.

Matth 11. 29.
Matt. 12. 20.
Matth. 9. 17.

Some tutors have not patience to deal with dull scholars, nor power to instill learning into them. But God hath both these ; he hath patience suitable to their weakness, and power over their incapacity : *The ear of the deaf shall hear, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing*. If a man meet with a crooked piece of wood in his work, he is fain to throw it by : But God and Christ can make *crooked ways strait*. Those poor souls that set their faces towards heaven notwithstanding they have hard thoughts of themselves, and that very justly, as the returning prodigal had ; yet God hath better thoughts of them ; and though they be dull of hearing, yet Christ encourageth them to learn of him ; he is a meek and lowly teacher. *Moses came roughly, and so did John ; but Christ comes to treat humbled sinners gently and tenderly : He will not break the bruised reed. He will not put new wine into old bottles.*

Rom. 6. 1.

Mic. 6. 18.

Tit. 2. 11.

Rom. 1. 12.

Secondly. The Doctrine conduceth to holiness, as well as comfort and encouragement ; and that is as welcome to a seriously humbled sinner, as the other. To sin that grace may abound, or because grace doth abound, is a sign of the want of grace, and of the sinfulness of sin. All acts of grace should be matter of wonder to a sinner, and will be to an humbled converted sinner : *Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity ?* And the same grace makes him to loath himself for his sins, Ezek. 36. 31. To be free to sin, because of Gods free grace, is a mortall sign : Gods mercy and grace are holy things, like himself ; and their proper fruit is holiness. *The grace of God that hath appeared to us, teacheth us, that denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world.* I beseech you brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice to God, holy, acceptable

table. Having therefore these promises, let us cleanse our selves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God, 2 Cor. 7. 1. They are Devils, and such as the Devil worketh effectually in, who abuse the grace of God, to sin against him. This was the sin of the Angels that fell, and this was the fall of man.

So much for the general Observations from the 22d. and 23d. Verses.

C H A P. XXIV.

Sheweth, to whose care God recommends his people. Particularly, from the first Clause of the 22d. Verse, And the Father said unto his servants ——. As also, the Nakedness and Uncleanneſs of every man by nature: From the next following, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him.

I Come now to the Doctrines arising from the several clauses of the words.

And the father said unto his servants, Who are these Servants?

I Answer. All creatures are Gods Servants, *Psal. 119. 91. All are thy servants.* Gods Prescience and Providence gives Law to all things.

But more especially, those that God makes use of in a sinners conversion, are here intended.

As 1st. Jesus Christ himself, he is the servant of God in this point. *Behold, my servant, whom I uphold, I have put my spirit in him, and he shall bring forth judgement to the gentiles, Isa. 42. 1.* that, is in their calling and conversion. And Angels are Gods servants herein: they were employed in celebrating the Messias his coming into the world to seek and to save that

2 Cor 5 18.
19.

1 John 2. 12.

which was lost, *Luke 2. 14.* And the Ministers of the Gospel are Gods servants herein: to them is committed the *ministry of reconciliation*: not onely to invite sinners to be reconciled to God; but also, to let those know it, who have obtained this grace or blessedness. *I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name sake.*

Yea, and Saints are Gods servants herein. How servicable were the Disciples to *Paul* upon his conversion? *Acts 9. 25.* they conveyed him from the rage of the *Jews*; at *Damascus*, they let him down by the wall: which was a high piece of service, and a great venture the Disciples ran in it. For Walls with the *Heathens*, were hallowed things, as Sanctuaries were in the Law, and it was a capital crime to go over them: yet the Disciples ventured themselves for *Paul*.

The Doctrine therefore is this.

Doct. That God commends his converts to the tender care of Angels and Saints, and especially of Jesus Christ and his Ministers. Christ commended his Mother, when he was upon the cross, to the care of the beloved Disciple: *John 19. 27. Behold thy mother,* saith Christ to him; *and from that time that Disciple took her to his own home.* And thus doth God take care of every man at his conversion. He saith to Christ, *behold the travel of thy soul.* He saith to the Angels, *behold here is your charge.* And he saith to Gospel-Ministers, *here is your bowels*; and, *here is your glory and joy.* And to the saints, *here is your fellow Citizen.*

Isa. 53 10.
Heb. 1. 14.
Phil. 12.
Thes. 2. 20.
Ephe. 2. 19,

John 17. 9.
Rom. 8. 1.
ver. 2.
Gal. 3.

Rev. 12. 11.
Luc. 22. 32.
Heb. 2. 14, 15.

Matth. 12. 18.

1. God commends his converts to the tender care of Christ, *Thine they were,* saith Jesus to his Father, *and thou gavest them me.* For what? To save them from the *Condemnation* of sin; and from the *Power* of sin; and to keep them from the power and hurt of the Devil. *Adam* was not thus kept, the Devil did hurt him. And to secure them from the accusations of the Devil: *The accuser of the brethren* it cast down. And to keep them from the poyson of Satans temptations, *Satan hath desired to winnow you,* but *I have prayed, that thy faith fail not.* And to deliver them from the fear of death, from the torment of that fear. To be tender of them in their infancy in grace, *My servants*.

servant whom I have chosen, that is Jesus Christ, a bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench. And to preserve them from apostacy: John 17. 12. Whilst I was in the world; I kept them, that they did not fall as Judas did.

2. God commits his converts to the tender care of Angels. The Angels have a special care over Saints, in their infancy in Grace; because Satan is full of envy and wrath against them. As it is said of the church, *The dragon was ready to devour the child so soon as it was born.* But what do the Angels do for them? Nay, what do they not, that is in their commission? They remove impediments betwixt them and Christ, as they *rolled away the stone from the Sepulcher.* They bad the holy Women go tell his Disciples, that he was risen. The Holy Angels puts good motions into the minds of good men, as evil Angels do evil motions into wicked mens minds; as into *Ahab*, and *Judas*, and *Ananias*, yea, and into godly men sometimes: as he *provoked David to number the people.* Good Angels have their special charge over Gods little ones. *Despise not one of these little ones;* little in faith, in grace: *for their Angels do always behold the face of my father in heaven.* The meanest godly man hath this priviledge, the Holy Angels are his Angels; they were *Lazarus's* Angels. The Angels rejoyce at mens conversion: they pitch their Tents about them, whilst they live here. *Psal. 34. 7.* attend their spirits to Heaven, when they die, *Luke 16.* and gather their bodies from amongst the wicked, when Christ comes again. *Matth. 24. 31.* Saints have a kind of communion with Holy Angels: and therefore are said to be come, *To an innumerable company of Angels,* Heb. 12.

Rev. 12. 4.

Matth. 28.
ver. 6. 7.

I Chro. 21. 1.
Matth. 18. 10.

Luke 16. 22.

22.

Objection: But we see not the Angels imployed for our good.

Answer. Yet we must believe they are, because the Scriptures tells us so. Tho their attendance be not so visible as it hath been formerly, yet it is as real. And besides, you may as well say, that the Devil doth not tempt you to evil, because you see him not, as that the Angels do not comfort you, and put you on to that which is good, and protect you from evil, because you see them not.

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3. God

3. God commends his converts to the tender care of the Ministers of Christ; and to them, next to Christ himself. What Christ said to *Peter*, he saith to all his Ministers, *Feed my Lambs.* The Ministers of Christ are wooers for him, *we pray you in Christs stead.* And when poor sinners come in to Christ, they are the Paranymps, the friends, both of the Bridegroom and the Bride.

A Ministers work is, to convert sinners, and to perfect Saints. *He gave gifts to men, for the perfecting of the Saints.* When men are begotten to Christ, it is Satans first design to draw them off from the Ministry, that they may be carried to and fro in their Religion, till like children, they make it but a bawble to play with, and at last throw it away.

Some new converts are not wholly free from the spirit of bondage. And Ministers must take heed of speaking to the grief of these, whom God hath wounded, as *Dauids* expression is. We must not turn the Cart-Wheel over Cummin; a little Wand is fitter to do this. It is the office of a Minister of Christ to open the bowels of Christ and of his Gospel, to new converts, that have not the Lightning and Thunder of the Law as yet fully out of their conscience. He must shew such the good will of Christ towards them, that *he will not leave them comfortless: That he will not break the bruised reed.*

See the tenderness of *Paul* over converted *Onesimus*: *Receive him, as my own bowels: receive him now above a Servant, as a Brother beloved in the Lord.* And so over the *Corinthians*, after they had been made sad by him for their miscarriages: now, he was as much for their comfort; *we were comforted in your comfort.* And his tender care for the converted *Romans*, *I have longed to see you, that I might establish you.* And God hath charged all his Ministers with the same tender care.

4. God commends every converted sinner in his infancy in grace, to the tender care of Saints: We exhort you, Brethren, as to other things, so to this, *See that ye comfort the feeble minded, and support the weak.* And so to the *Romans*: *Such as are weak in the faith, receive; but not to doubtful disputations.*

Use First. this is encouragement to new converts; you see what care God takes of you. God sees the Devil hates you, and envies you, and will do you mischief if he can, because he is cast out of you. And that the world hates you, because you are not of it. It may be friends, tho they do not hate you, yet they may with draw much of their love from you, as the Jews did from Paul, and as the friends of some that followed Christ, which made him say, *He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me.* And it may be your own Consciences are not thorowly settled, after the terrors and shakings which you felt in your Conversion. But against all this, you may see the tenderness of God over you, that he hath committed you to the tender care of Saints, and Ministers, and Angels, and of Christ himself.

Acts 26. 18.

John 15. 19.

Acts 9.

Matth. 10. 37.

Secondly, This conduceth to the comfort of elder Christians. For whom the Lord loveth, *he loveth to the end.* His tender care of you, that began at your Conversion, will last till your Perfection: *Being confident of this very thing, that he that hath begun a good work in you, will perform it, or will finish it, to the day of Jesus Christ.* Parents are commonly fond of their Children when they are young; but when they are grown up, they let them shift for themselves. But God is as fond of Saints, to speak with reverence, when they are old Saints, as when they were young. You may apply that in *Isaiah* to your selves: *Even to your old age, I am he; the same I ever was to you, Even to hoar hairs will I carry you.* We carry Children only when they are young; but God will carry his in their old Age.

John 13. 1.

Phil. 1. 6.

Isa. 46. 4.

O, it is a blessed thing to be in a state of Grace; you are in the beginning of this blessedness now; but *your latter end shall be better then your beginning*; as it is said of Job. So much for the first Clause, *And the Father said unto his servants.*

I now proceed to the next, *Bring forth the best Robe, and put it on him.* Here the Father first Cloathes his Son, and then feasts him. As Joseph changed his Raiment, before he went in to Pharaoh. And men came not to the Marriage-feast without a Wedding-garment. So the Father of the Prodigal, without a Wedding-garment. So the Father of the Prodigal, clothed

Gen. 42.

Matthew 22.

Luke 22. 30. cloathe him suitably, to sit with him at his Table; as Christ said to his Disciples, *That ye may eat and drink at my table.* This supposeth, that the Prodigal was in an ill Habit at his coming home, he had but poor Cloaths. Whence we have this Doctrine:

Doct. That all men in their Natural condition are unclean, and naked Creatures. Our first Parents, so soon as they lost their Innocency, were naked; *they saw they were so.* Sin makes men naked; so *Israels* sin in the Golden Calf made them naked. *Joshuas filthy Garments* signified, how naked and polluted sin makes a man. The nakedness and pollution of every man in his natural state, is evidently set out by that metaphorical Child; *Thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite*, Unclean Nations. Was not *Abraham* their Father, and *Sarah* their Mother? Yes, but the Holy Ghost speaks as Christ did to the *Jews*, *Ye are of your father the Devil, because ye do his lusts.* So the Prophet tells this polluted degenerated People, *That their father was an Amorite, and their mother an Hittite*: They were more like the Children of these Nations, than the Children of *Abraham* and *Sarah*. Then the Prophet goes on, *Thou wast not swaddled at all*, but left open and naked as thou wast born, *and no eye pitied thee*; therefore in a worse condition than that wounded man that was stripped of his Raiment by Thieves. For tho neither the Priest nor the Levite pitied him, yet the *Samaritan* did. And then *thou wast cast out into the open field, to the loathing of thy person*: As the Angels that sinned, were cast out of Heaven, and man out of Paradise: So wast thou cast out of the Cradle and House, not into the Streets, but into the open Field, into the wide World; as loathed of God, a loathsome Object in his sight; and therefore, *as without God in the World.* All these expressions are from known uses and customes, either amongst the *Jews* or *Gentiles*, as all Allegorical Scriptures are. And they all have their spiritual sense and meaning, holding forth the nakedness and filthiness of every man in his natural state.

The first man defiled humane Nature, and ever since men by nature *are altogether become filthy*, or putrid, in the *Hebrew* it is *stinking*. The Devil is a foul unclean Spirit, and

Psal. 14. 3.

and natural men his children, are soul unclean Creatures. Christ told the *Laodiceans*, that they were naked. And saith Rev. 3. 17. the Psalmist, *Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish.* Psal. 49.

Use 1. *First*, This informs us of the blindness of men in their natural state; that they are naked, loathsome Creatures, and yet see it not: as Christ said to the Angel of the Church of *Laodicea*, *Thou knowest not that thou art naked*; in a worse condition than *Adam* and *Eve*, who knew that they were naked. Rev. 3. 17. Gen. 3. 7. There are many who are godly in their own eyes, and in the eyes of others too, and yet in Gods, an abomination. *There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet are not washed from their filthiness.* Natural men are like men that dream; such as the Prophet *Isaiah* speaks of, and the Apostle *Jude*; they dream they are such, as they find they are not, when the Eye of Conscience is opened and awakened. Pr. 30. 12.

2. If they do see and know their nakedness, yet they are not ashamed; they are impudent Creatures; as God called the *Jews*, *All the house of Israel are impudent and hard hearted.* Ez. 3. 7. *Thou hadst a whores forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed*; Jer. 3. 3. saith the Lord to the same People. So in the Prophet *Jeremiah*, *Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination?* Jer. 6. 15. *Nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush.* The Apostle saith of such men, *They glory in their shame*; they Phil. 3. 19. boast of their base lusts.

3. When natural men see their nakedness, and are ashamed of it (as it is said, *The people were naked to their shame.*) Exod. 32. 25. Yet then they do, as *Adam* and *Eve* did, sew Fig-leaves together to make them Aprons. Shame is the Lucky that waits upon sin, and constrains the Conscience to blush, when the face doth not; and now man shifts and shirks for himself; he seeks to cover his nakedness and shame with Fig-leaves. The Fig-leaves were cursed by Christ, and so are all the base shifts of a sinner under a curse. Marth. 21. 19.

Use 2. *Secondly*, The point serves to Exhortation to men, To get the pollution of their own blood washed off, and their shame and nakedness covered. Nothing in the World will

do

1 Pet. 1. 19.
 Heb 9. 22.
 1 John 1. 7.

do this; but the Blood of Jesus; Blood must be done away with blood; your polluted blood, with Christs precious blood; both the guilt, and the stain of it: *Without blood there is no remission: And the blood of Jesus Christ his son, cleanseth us from all sin.*

CHAP. XXV.

Sheweth, The Justification, Honour and Liberty, which God bestows upon Believers. From the last foregoing, and next following Clauses of the 22. Verse.

Bring forth the best Robe, and put it on him, and put a Ring on his hand, and Shoes on his feet.

AND first, what is the best Robe? It must needs intimate the righteousness of Christ imputed to a repenting Sinner: there is no cloathing so good as this. Whence we have this Doctrine,

Dott. That God the Father doth put the righteousness of Christ his Son upon true Converts. Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, saith the Apostle. And as many as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. Christ is said to be a Believers righteousness: Who of God is made unto us righteousness. He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, saith the Prophet. No covering sufficient for a sinners nakedness, but the righteousness of Christ, which is, his holy Nature, and his Obedience, both active and passive. These are his skirts which he casts over our nakedness, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. No righteousness but this, hath any place in a Sinners Justification. When a Sinner comes to account with God, he can never plead his own Righteousness or Holiness. He cannot boast, Lord I have Grace enough to justify me; but must pray, Lord enter not into judgment with me, for in thy sight can no flesh living be justified. All our own righteousnesses are as filthy rags. We must say

Rom. 13. 14.
 Gal. 3. 27.
 1 Cor. 1. 30.
 Isaiah 61. 21.

Hebrew 7. 26.
 Ezra 16. 8.
 2 Cor. 5. 21.

Psalms 143. 2.
 Isaiah 64. 6.

say in this case, as the men of *Bethshemesh* said, *Who is able to stand before this holy God?* and as *Job*, *If I say I will wash me,* that is, so as to leave no spot in me, *mine own clothes would abhor me.* No works of Righteousness which we have done, are commensurate and adequate no payment to the Justice of God. Alas we halt, as *Jacob*, in our best deeds, to our dying day. The Righteousness of Christ which God puts upon a Believer, gives a sweet savour to him, as *Esau's* Garments did to *Jacob*. In the point of justification, we must do as they that fled from the pursuer of Blood; they fled for their Lives to the Altar, or City of Refuge: so there is no way to escape the Justice of God, and the curse of the Law, but by flying to the Righteousness of Christ. Shall *Adams* sin, saith *Bernard*, be imputed to me, and shall not Christ's Righteousness? The worth of man is out of himself. *Thou wast beautiful, through my comeliness put upon thee.* Scripture Language speaks loud and plain in this case: *Who is made of God unto us righteousness.* That we might be made the righteousness of God in him. He shall be called the Lord our righteousness. As by the disobedience of one, many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous.

1 Sam. 6. 20.

Job 9. 32.

Gen. 32. 31.

Gen. 27. 27.

Ezec. 16. 14.

2 Cor. 2. 30.

2 Cor. 5. 22.

Jer. 23. 6.

Isa. 45. 24.

Rom. 5. 19.

Oh the tender care of God in providing sufficient and rich clothing for a poor naked repenting sinner! When God had promised Christ to our first Parents, then he made them clothes. And what did he make them of? It is said, he made them of skins; that is, of the skins of beasts offered in Sacrifice; which God taught them betime; as we see in *Abels* offering, which was a Type of Christ.

Gen. 3. 22.

Gen. 4. 4.

Heb. 10. 5, 10.

And besides, Christ's Imputed Righteousness, God also clothes a Believer with the Grace of Christ, or righteousness from Christ inherent in him. The Scripture joins these together, in the same subject: Christ is made of God unto us righteousness and sanctification. The Graces of Gods Spirit are clothing that God puts on Believers: *Be clothed with humility.* And the Apostle compares a meek and quiet Spirit, to a cloathing ornament. So that as Christ's Righteousness imputed, is the converts Robe; to his Righteousness communicated, may be said to be the lining of the Robe.

1 Cor. 1. 30.

1 Pet. 5. 5.

1 Pet. 3. 4.

Rom. 5. 20.

Eph. 1. 7, 8.

2 Pet. 1. 3.

2 Sam. 24. 23.

It follows, *put a ring on his hand*. Besides a necessary garment, the Father gives him that which is more especially for honour and ornament; which shews, that the Grace of God to a returned sinner, doth abound, and superabound: *Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. Wherein he hath abounded towards us, according to the riches of his grace. According as his divine power hath given us all things that pertain to life and godliness.* As it is said of *Araunah*; he gave to *David* as a king: So the Lord gives to converted sinners as a God, gifts like himself; like a Great and Gracious God. *Put a ring on his hand*: This was the honouring part of his Entertainment.

Gen. 41. 42.

Esther 8. 2.

Esther 3. 12.

There are two special uses of a Ring mentioned in Scripture: It was used as a piece of Honour, and as a Seal. For the first, we read how *Pharaoh* took off his Ring from his hand, and put it upon *Josephs* hand, and made him ride in the second Chariot which he had. And so the King took off his Ring and gave it to *Mordicai*, when he honoured him. For the latter we also read that *Haman* sealed the writing with the Kings Ring.

Doct. Whence we learn, That God puts Honour upon a Believer. It may be said of such a man, This is the man which the King will honour.

Ist. 41. 8.

1. God doth him the Honour, to take him nigh to himself; to be his friend, as he called *Abraham*; and as he did *Moses*, of whom it is said, *God spake with him mouth to mouth, as a man speaks with his friend.*

Psalm 25. 14.

He leans on Gods Bosome: *The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him*; and not only nigh him as a friend, but as a Son: *This my son*; a Convert is high born, Born of God. *Come out from amongst them, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.* And such Honour have all his Saints.

2 Cor. 6. 17,

18.

Rev. 1. 5, 6.

2. God Honours Converts in taking them into the Royal order of Kings and Priests: *who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests to God and his Father.* Not of this world: *My kingdom is not of this world*, saith Christ to *Pilate*: Neither is theirs. Yet they often command a veneration from it: *Thou art a mighty prince amongst us*, say the Children of *Heth* to *Abraham*. Or, as the Hebrew, a Prince of God. Their Kingdom at present

John 18. 36.

Gen. 23. 6.

is more an object of Faith, than of sight. A believer hath a Princely Power, he hath power with God. And as God makes him a King, so also a Priest, of a *Royal Priesthood*; after a higher and better order than *Aarons*; after the order of *Jesus Christ*. Christ was King and Priest, and so is he. Now Priests were to offer Sacrifice, and to make intercession, and so doth he. And the Sacrifice he offers, is not like those under the Law, the Flesh of Bulls and Goats; but as Christ offered up himself to God, so a Believer offers up himself as a Living Sacrifice, as a sweet savour to God by Christ. And he refresheth God, as it is said of the fruit of the vine, which was offered in Sacrifice.

2 Cor. 5. 7.
Psalm 112. 2.
Gen. 32. 28.
1 Peter 2. 9.
Rom. 12. 1.
2 Cor. 8. 5.
Rev. 8. 4.
Judg. 9. 13.

And he makes intercession; he Prayeth with the same Spirit that Christ prayed with? *God hath sent forth the spirit of his son into our hearts, teaching us to cry Abba Father.* The Spirit of Christ Prays in him, and helpeth his infirmities in Prayer; and so his Prayers have power with God, as *Jacobs* had, and as Christs have: *I know thou hearest me always.* And therefore Christ delights to hear him Pray: *Let me hear thy voice, for it is sweet.*

Gen. 4. 6.
Rom. 8. 26.
Gen. 32.
John 11. 42.
Cant. 2. 14.

2. A Ring was used as a Seal. The writing was sealed with the Kings ring: A convert is one Sealed, *In whom after ye believed, ye were sealed with the holy spirit of promise.* Christ was sealed by God the Father; And so are his, they are entered amongst Gods sealed ones. Now amongst other uses of a Seal, there are these, To assure, and to distinguish.

Eph. 3. 13.
Eph. 2. 13.
John 6. 27.
Rev. 73. 4.

1. The Spirit makes a believer sure to God; *The foundation of the Lord standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knows them that are his.* And the spirit makes God sure to him: the spirit is his witness, and makes him clear in the things of God: The evidence of the Spirit is to him instead of Miracles. Yea, it doth more than Miracles: they gave only assurance of Christ and his Gospel, that they came from God with the offers of salvation: but the spirit gives assurance of our saving state in Grace, and assurance of glory to come.

2 Tim. 2. 19.
Rom. 8. 16.
1 Cor. 2. 12.

2. God by his Seal distinguisheth him from the world; as Christ did his Disciples: *Ye are not of the world, but I have*

John 15. 19.

chosen you out of the world. God sets his own Image, the Impression of his own likeness on a good man; as the Seal doth on the Wax: he is made *partaker of the divine nature; renewed to the likeness of God.*

Thirdly, It follows, *put shoes on his feet*; that he may be prepared for stony and thorny ways in this world; and that his feet also may be adorned, and his foot-steps clean.

It may also signify, that the Prodigal was now at liberty. To be bare-foot, was a sign of Captivity and slavery. The Prophet walked bare-footed, in sign of the Jews Captivity. The Prodigal had been a slave in his far Countrey, the Citizen to whom he joined himself, let him to feed his Swine. But now he is come home, he is a free-man: *The Son is free.* When the Children of Israel were to go out of Egypt, the House of bondage, they were to put on their shoes. So when a sinner is converted, he is delivered from the House of Bondage, *into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.* And it may signify that a Convert is shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace; that is, a courageous and undaunted spirit in the ways of of God, a prepared and fixed heart. When a sinner becomes a Saint, the world is against him, and the Devil is against him, and he is like to meet with the hatred of both: *All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.* Now what saith the Apostle in this case? God hath not given us *the spirit of fear*, but the spirit of *Power*, and the spirit of *Love*, Love that casteth out that fear which *hath torment in it*; and the spirit of *a sound mind.* It was part of *Ashurs Blessing*, *Thy shoes shall be iron and brass*, to tread upon thy enemies. So Jesus Christ was said to have *feet like fine brass*, to note his Power, in treading down his enemies. And his Disciples have the same given to them also.

USE. Now as the Sun, Moon; and Stars, have a double Use, Illumination, and Influence: So have these Doctrines.

1. They Communicate Divine Light to our minds: they discover the mysteries of Gospel Grace, the wonderful love of God, in Christ, to poor sinners, especially in their Conversion. Behold and wonder.

2. These

2. These things may have influence upon our hearts and affections, and so conduce much to our Holiness : for if these things be so, and we have experience of them, *What manner of persons ought we to be, in all holy conversation and godliness?* Our lives should be more excellent than the lives of others : 2 Pet. 3. 11. O let not Christ have cause to say to you, as to them in Matth. 5. 47. *What do you more than others?* And as you should do such things as others do not, nor can do; so you should not do such things as others do. *The Israel play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend. Remember Joseph, how should I do this wickedness, and sin against God?* And *Nehemiah, shall such a man as I be?* All a Christians Priviledges should be pressing arguments to more and more Holiness. And the precious promises you are under, should convey more of the Divine Nature to you. You should walk as Princes in the Land; be of a choice Spirit, as *Caleb* was. Let all you converse with, see that you are departed from the World to God; and that of a truth God is in you. And so much for this verse.

Acts 13. 42.

Hos. 4. 15.

Gen. 39. 9.

Neh. 6. 11.

2 Cor. 7. 1.

2 Pet. 1. 4.

Num. 14. 22.

CHAP. XXVI.

Discourseth of the peace and comfort which God puts into the hearts of sincere penitents. From the 23. verse:

And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and be merry.

THIS verse continues the transaction betwixt God and a Penitent sinner. Having attired him both with what was necessary, and ornamental; he now feasts him with excellent Food.

The case is extremely altered with the Prodigal; in the far Countrey, he fed swine, and fed with them, and glad that he could do it. But at his return to his Fathers House, the Fat-

ted

ted Calf must be killed and dressed for him : and all things
furable to it.

The Fatted Calf was Angels food : *Abraham* prepared
such a Calf to feast and refresh the Angels that appeared to
him from the Lord. Manna was called *Angels food* ; not be-
cause Angels did eat it ; but because God used Angels in pre-
paring it for his People. But the Angels did eat of the Fat-
ted Calf that *Abraham* prepared for them ; or, which was all
one, they seemed to do it, as accepting what *Abraham*
intended for the best. A Calf was one of the Sa-
crifices in the Law ; and used not only in sin-offer-
ings, but in thanksgiving Offerings, which were Holy Feasts.
So will we render to thee the Calves of our lips. An allusion to the
Sacrificing of this Creature. And in both, it was a figure of
Christ. And then it follows : *Let us eat and be merry* ; this is
proper to a Feast ; *Go your way and eat the fat, and drink the
sweet ; neither be sorry, neither be ye grieved ; for the joy of the
Lord is your strength.* From the spiritual meaning of which,
we have this Doctrine.

Doct. That God gives a true penitent, strong consolation.
He gives him dainties to live upon : God feasteth him, and he
feasts and rejoyceth with God : *Joy shall be in heaven over one
sinner that repenteth.* Now is a time that the Soul is fed with
exceedings. A sincere convert doth eat and drink with God
in his Kingdom ; as Christ told his Disciples they should do ;
this is usually a Converts entertainment when he first returns to
God ; it may be, afterwards he is kept to a set diet. The
fatted Calf is not killed every day ; as the Lords Table is not
Meat for every day, but it is an extraordinary feast ; the Eu-
charist, that is, a thanksgiving Feast : Tho at some seasons in the
primitive times, it was used thrice a week.

But why doth God give such great entertainment to sinners
at their first conversion ?

First, Because it is the celebration of their new Birth. Birth-
days are rejoicing days ; the Angels Rejoyced at the Birth of
Christ. And God and Angels rejoyce at the new Birth of a
Convert, and rejoyce with him.

If a travelling woman hath such great Joy that a man is born into the world; oh what are the mutual joys that are betwixt God and a Convert, that a new man is born, that a sinner is born again? This is signified in that Promise and Prophecy of Gospel-Days; *In this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people, Jews and Gentiles, that believe in Christ, a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.* John 16. 21. Isa. 25. 6.

All these metaphorical expressions set forth the spiritual delicacies wherewith the Lord entertains Converts under the Gospel.

2. Because the conversion of sinners, especially such as are set forth by this Prodigal, requires it: they pass thorow great straits, and sharp pangs in their New-Birth. This Prodigal was ready to perish: *I perished with hunger.* 2 Reason Ver. 17.

The Spirit of Bondage possesseth them; their consciences feel the curse of the Law: *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are writtenth in the book of the law to do them.* Gal. 3. 10. The Law hath no pity on a sinner; It represents to a sinners conscience the second Death, as well as the first: And therefore upon his repentance, there is need of those times of refreshment from the presence of the Lord. We read how these Converts in the Acts, were pricked at heart. And oh the bitterness of Soul that was in *Mary Magdalen* for a time at her Conversion! she needed a time of refreshing; and therefore Jesus bad her *Go in peace, her sins were forgiven.* Christ is put in office to heal the broken in heart, and to set at liberty the captives. Luke 7. 48. Luke 4. 18.

A sinner, in the way of his conversion, is in Bondage, as *Israhels* children are said to be. Now when conversion is wrought, Christ makes men free from this legal Bondage. *If the son make you free, then ye are free indeed:* Christ is the man, that is as a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a drie place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. Gal. 4. Joh. 8. 36. Isa. 32. 2.

Quest. But in what particulars lye these refreshings, that weary Souls have from the Lord at their conversion?

Ans.

Ans. First, as the spirit convinced them before of sin and wrath, so now he convinceth them of righteousness to cover the sinner and his sins, and to *present him without spot and wrinkle to himself and his Father.* Oh what a refreshing is this righteousness to a poor Soul who sees all his own righteousness to be as filthy rags! *Adam* did not see himself so righteous in his state of innocency, as a convert may see himself in the righteousness of Christ: *Adams* was not *everlasting righteousness*, as Christ is.

Secondly, The Spirit of Adoption succeeds the spirit of bondage, in a convert: *God hath not given us the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of adoption.* The Law now changes its office towards a poor sinner. It came before with thunder and Lightning, which made the heart to ake, and put the sinners conscience into tremblings, made him *Magormissabib*, a terror to himself round about. But now the Spirit of Adoption takes place, the Soul now can say, My God. The Law owns full satisfaction, and lays by its condemning power. And this cools the heats that the conscience of the poor sinner was in.

Thirdly, Now the spirit doth his Office, as *the Comforter.* Christ gave the spirit this Name, *the Comforter*, for this purpose, to turn the converted sinners sorrow into joy. He that was *the spirit of burning*, in the convinced sinners conscience; to the converted, is *the spirit of gladness.*

Fourthly, After conversion the spirit further befriends a convert, in joyning with the evidence of conscience on his behalf. At first the spirit witnesses against him, and makes his conscience to do the like, as he did in *Saul*, and *Judas.* But after conversion, the *Spirit it self witnesseth with our spirits, that we are the children of God.* Conscience in a man is as a thousand witnesses; what then is the spirit of God, when he undertakes the work?

The spirit hath an assuring Office, and all the expressions in Scripture relating to Assurance, are applied to him: he *beareth record* in Heaven, and in earth: He is an *earnest*, and He is a *Seal*, and He is the *spirit of truth*; all this, he is ordained both by the Father and the Son to be to a convert. As the work of conversion is the spirits; so also the evidencing of

John 15. 8.
Eph. 5. 27.
1. 64. 6.
Deut 9. 24.
Rom. 8. 15.
Psal. 42. 11.
John 14. 26.
Mal. 4. 1.
Isa 4. 4.
Isa. 51. 3.
Rom. 8. 16.
1 John 5. 7, 8.
2 Cor. 1.
John 14. 17.

of that state, is his work. The Holy Ghost casts out fears, and fancies, and disturbing apprehensions, that work in a mans convinced conscience, and gives him the Spirit of a sound mind.

Fifthly, Now all the offices of Christ let out refreshing influence on the Soul of a convert; he is under the influence of his merit, and spirit. Christ, as a Priest, removes his guilt: *Thos his sins be sought for, they cannot be found.* And Christ as King, gives him power over his lusts, and over the Prince of Darkeness, his spiritual enemies; which are the worst. And he leaneth on Christs bosom, as his Prophet; he knows his state in God, and *the things that are freely given him of God.* Beams of holy Light dart from Heaven into his heart; and sweet gales of peace into his conscience: and his Soul is filled with marrow and fatness when he meditates on God; who used not to be in his thoughts before, or if he was, to his terror. And now the creature too is altered; that which was but water is now Wine; the vanity and vexation of spirit that was in it before, is now taken away. Whatsoever happens to him, that is materially evil, is changed to his good; as *Balaams* curse was into a blessing. The sting is not only pulled out of death, but out of every thing else that is evil. And Ordinances, which before were as *Gideons* dry fleece, are now as his wet fleece; and Manna, is Manna, and not light meat: All the Persons in the Godhead have a compassionate and kind fence for him: the Father *pitieeth him, as a man his Son*; and Christ *is touched with the feeling of his infirmities*; and the Spirit *helpeth his infirmities.* And more, he hath now communion with all the Persons in the Godhead, which *Adam* had not in his state of innocency so distinctly; he had not that distinct communion with Christ; he had not that liberty to eat of the Tree of Life, as a Believer hath, who lives upon Christs flesh and Blood: Christ is to him the *Bread of life*, and the *water of life*: Christ is that *hidden Manna*, the *Bread from heaven*, the *Tree of life*, that *true vine*, that *pure river of Water of Life*: he is the *Life*; hath life in himself, and is a *quickening spirit*, and *quickeneeth whom he will*. And to many other useful and delightful things, doth the Holy Ghost liken Jesus Christ, in Heaven and Earth; he is the *sun of righteousness*, the *bright morning star*, the *light of the world*, the *lyon of the tribe of Judah*, the *lamb of God*, the

Jer. 50. 20.

1 Cor. 2. 12.

Psal. 10. 4.

Psal. 103. 13.

Heb. 4. 15.

Rom. 8. 26.

Matthew 4. 3.

Rev. 22. 16.

lilly, John 1. 5.

Matth. 12. 50.
Col. 3. 11.

lilly, rose and the tree of life; he is Husband and Wife, Father and Mother, Brother, and Sister, and Friends: Believers are so to him; much more is he so to them, *who is all, and in all.*

Thus you have had some hints, what those refreshments are which come from the presence of the Lord, to Repenting sinners.

Quest. But do all Converts fare alike?

Luk 7.
Ila. 66. 7, 8.

Ans. No, not sensibly, or in their own apprehensions, and at present. Some have but a few steps from *Egypt to Canaan*; when others pass thorow a long Wilderness betwixt them. *Mary* wept much for the time, but the time was but short, she had no sooner wiped her tears from Jesus his feet, but he wiped them from her eyes, tells her, *her sins were forgiven*, and bids her, Go in peace. It is with some Converts, as it was with *Sion*, *Before she travelled, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man-child.* But others have their darker and longer days of humiliation; as *Eshber* had of purification before she was taken by the King to be his Queen.

Esher 2. 12.

All Converts are in Gods Family so soon as in a state of Grace; but some are not received to that near Communion with God, which others enjoy. The other Disciples leaned not on Jesus his Bosom, as *John* did. As the Conversion of some sinners, is with great observation; So is the entertainment they have from God, at their coming in to him.

Psal. 77. 2.

Yet the reason why some lye so long under fears of God, and of their state, is of themselves: their Souls *refuse to be comforted*, as his did. A weak conscience refuseth comfort, as a weak Stomach doth Meat. Or it may be, they look for Peace and settlement of conscience in Sanctity, from their own, and not Christ Merits. But alas, they may seek it long enough so, and not find it, as *Saul* did his Fathers Asses. Paul knew this when he said to the Philippians; *That I may be found in Christ, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ.*

John 1. 22.

Or it may be, they lay the guilt of sin in the wrong place, that is, upon their own consciences: whereas they should transfer it upon their Sacrifice for sin, which was Jesus Christ, *The lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.* It is Christ
Sacrificed

Sacrificed for a sinner, and which alone can take away the conscience of sin, that is, the trouble and terror of conscience for sin. Heb. 10. 2.

USE, 1. This serves for encouragement to those who are at a distance from God, to return to him : you see your welcome and entertainment ; you will have Angels Food. God will *rejoyce over you with his whole heart, and with his whole soul.* And Jesus Christ will bring you *into his banqueting house, or House of Wine.* And the Spirit will do the office of the Comforter to you. And as the Angels made acclamations at the Birth of Christ, so will they do at your New-Birth : when a sinner is born again, *there is joy in the presence of the Angels of God.* Jer. 32. 41. Cant. 2. 4. Luke 15. 10.

And if you be not moved at all this ; I may say to you, as the Lord said to the Jews, *Earth, Earth, Earth !* So, O stony, stony, stony Heart, that is not affected with these condescensions of God ! O what will a sinner answer when Christ saith to him, how often would I, and you would not ? Jer. 22. 29.

It is not for want of call or encouragement, that sinners come not in to God : He *commands men every where to repent.* And he intreats them to be reconciled : *As tho God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christs stead be ye reconciled unto God.* And he gives the highest assurance of his reallity in the case, that is possible : *As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way, and live ; turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel ?* And whatsoever plea men may make from their impotency, for their not repenting, and turning to God ; yet they will assuredly find that it is not their *cannot*, but their *will not*, that will damn them. *They will not frame their doings to turn to the Lord.* Acts 17. 30. 2 Cor. 5. 20. Ez. 33. 11. Hos. 5. 4.

USE 2. The second Use of the point may be for Caution to Converts, that they mistake not in their expectations. Think not your Father in Heaven shall Feast you always alike ; the Fatted Calf is not to be killed every day. *Abraham made a Feast for Isaac at his weaning, there was great joy that day : and so doth God a Convert in the day that he weans him from his Lusts, and from the World ; now God makes you a feast of* Gen. 21. 8.

fat things, of refined wine. But you must not reckon upon the like every day. It was but once that *Paul* was taken up into the third Heavens; and twice that God appeared to *Solomon*. A Godly mans first and last days are commonly his best. *I loved Israel when he was a child, saith God*, Hof. 11. 1. And mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; the latter word explains the first; for the end of that man is peace. And as at first, mans diet was only green Herbs and Fruits, but in after times he had the liberty of every living creature: So God at first may diet a Convert low, and afterwards make him to live higher; more sensibly upon Christ, whose flesh is meat indeed: and to say, *the life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the son of God*. Christ is a sure supply to all thirsty Souls; If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.

1 Kings 11.

Psal. 37. 37.

Gen. 1. 29.

Gen. 9. 3.

Gal. 2. 20.

John. 7. 37.

Quest. But how is it then that many Converts spend most of their days in the Wilderness, and in sorrow?

Ans. 1. It is their own fault, if they have not a comfortable life even in the Wilderness: for this is the promise, *I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and there will I speak comfortably to her.*

Hof. 2. 14.

2 Cor. 1. 5.

Rom. 8. 37.

Psal. 91. 25.

Isa. 43. 2.

Isa. 41. 10.

2. Know that there is no condition befalls a man in a state of Grace, but comfort belongs to it. In sufferings for Christ, your comforts exceed your sorrows: *As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation by Christ aboundeth*: indeed superaboundeth; for as the Apostle saith, *In all these we are more than conquerors*. And for all other tryals and temptations, there are promises of comfort under them, and of the presence of God with you in them. *I will be with him in trouble. And I will be with thee when thou passest thorow the water and thorow the fire.* And what is the presence of God with us for in such cases? It is to strengthen, help, uphold us: *fear you not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, and uphold you with the right-hand of my righteousness.*

And 3. There is no evil befalls a man in a state of Grace, but he may act Grace in it; and the acting of Grace brings in comfort. If faith be acted, it fills the heart with joy and peace: *The God of hope fill you with joy and peace in believing.*

Rom. 15. 13.

And.

And hope brings comfort with it : *We rejoyce in hope of the glory of God*, Rom. 5. 2. And *patience works comfortable experience*, ver. 5. And *love casteth out fear*, that hath torment, 1 John 4. 18. And meekness hath the promise of Satisfaction, Psal. 22. 26. And he will *beautifie the meek with salvation*, Plal. 149. 4. *The meek will be guide in judgement, the meek will he teach his way*, Plal. 25. 9. *The meek shall inherit the earth*, Matth. 5. 5. And *sincerity begets rejoycing*. And God himself dwells with the *humble spirit, to revive the spirit* 2 Cor. 1. 22. of the humble, Ilsa 57. 15. Grace and peace are commonly joyned together by the Apostle, in his salutations. So that all the Tryals of good men, have honey in their Carcasses, as *Sampsons* Lyon had; and like *Jonathans* Rod, are dipped in honey. What then is the reason, that some Christians can speak no more experimentally herein? But because they are impatient, and passionate at Gods trying providences, as *Jonah* was. Had we Faith at such times, it would bring in rest and satisfaction; and had we patience, we should possess our souls; and could we wait, God would work such things for us, as are worth our waiting for. *Eye hath not seen, or ear heard, besides thee, O God, what thou hast prepared for them that wait for thee*, Ilsa. 64. 4.

And thus much for the 23^d. verse, which describeth the entertainment the Prodigal received upon his return to his Father.

Now follows the reason of it, in the 24th. verse; *For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found: And they began to be merry*. Whereof in the succeeding Chapters.

C H A P. XXVII.

Sheweth, That before Conversion, every man is a dead man. From the first Clause of the twenty fourth Verse.

For this my son was dead.

THE Prodigal herein, as well as in other particulars, representing the state of man by nature; we have this evident Doctrine:

Doct. That all men before conversion, are dead men. All men, even the Elect themselves; the Scripture makes no distinction in this case. *We all*, (all we that believe) *were by nature the children of wrath, as well as others*, Eph. 2. 3. And, *All were dead*. And therefore conversion is called a passing from death to life. *By this we know that we are passed from death to life*, 1 John 3. 14. The fall of the first man, cast all his posterity into a dead sleep: they have no feeling. Many of the *Heathens*, both Poets and Philosophers, have borrowed several fancies from the History of Scripture: as the *Elisian Fields* from the Garden of *Eden*; *Nectar* and *Ambrosia* from the miraculous *Manna*: *Euridice* her being slain with the Serpent, from the Serpent's beguiling *Eve*, and many more. And some of their sublime notions, receive the greater dignity, from their correspondency to the Doctrine of the Holy Scriptures. So, answerable to this very point, of a natural mans being a dead man, *Pythagoras* made use of this Embleme, To set *νεκροδκιον*, an empty Coffin, in every mans place, that left him and his rules of life.

The Scriptures are abundant in the proof of this point: *If through the offence of one, many were dead. Adams posterity were dead by his offence as well as himself. If he died for all, then were all dead*: even the Elect, as well as others. Those that
rose

Rom. 5. 5.
2 Cor. 5. 14.
Matth. 27.

rose out of their graves, at Christ's Resurrection, were no less dead, than those that did not arise; to those chosen vessels which God calls and converts from a state of sin, to himself, they were before as dead in sin as others. And it is not only so with profane and loose sinners; but with every man, tho never so moralized, if not a Gospel convert; he is a dead man.

Now this state of death, in which every natural man is, lyeth in four things.

1. In a separation from God. As the Soul is the life of the body; so is God the life of the Soul: *David* calls him, *the God of his life*. Now when the Soul is gone from the body, the body is but a dead carcase, and so is every man while separated from God. Every natural man is *without God in the world*. This was signified by *Adams* remove from the presence of God: he *hid himself* from God. And by the Lords driving *Cain* out of his presence. God was the stock upon which man grew at first: *Adam, the son of God*: and we are his off-spring. Now when a branch or arm of a Tree is cut off, it withers and dies. Upon the fall, all men were cut off from God; as the *Jews, cast away, branches broken off*, and so withered and dead. And therefore their calling is said to be life from the dead. A natural man hath no Union with God, and so no communion; without any spiritual influence from God: *Alienated from the life of God*.

Psalms 42. 8.

Ephes. 2. 12.

Gen. 3. 10.

Gen. 4. 14.

Luc. 3. 38.

Act. 17. 28.

Rom. 11.

ver. 15.

ver. 17.

Ephes. 4. 18.

2ly. Every man in his natural condition, is dead in law, by the guilt of sin. He is a condemned person, tho sentence be not executed, He is *condemned already*. There is a high charge lyes against every Soul in a natural state.

1. The guilt of *Adams* sin lies upon him, till it be taken off by Christ. Whilst a man remains in the first *Adam*, he is under the guilt of the first sin: *by the offence of one*; that is, *Adam, Judgement came upon all men to condemnation*.

Rom. 5. 18.

Rom. 5. 12.

2 Every man in his natural condition is under the guilt of Original sin, the corruption of nature: which also brings mankind under death, even such as have not sinned after the similitude of *Adams* transgression. And,

Ephes. 2. 1.

3. Every

John 3. 20.

3ly, Every man, in his natural state, is under the guilt of actual sins: and so is *dead in trespasses and sins*. He hath not the life of God in him, no power in him to work the works of God. Now when a man lies under all this guilt, he must needs be dead in law, in a state of damnation.

Num. 14. 10.

15.

Korn. 8. 2.

Eph. 2. 1.

3ly. Men in a state of nature, are dead in respect of the pollution and power of sin: men that were legally polluted, were reckoned as dead men, for the time, as to any converse with the living: so *Miriam*, when she was leprous, was separated from the Camp. They were as *free amongst the dead*: and the Apostle joyns the Law of sin, and the Law of death together. Sin eats up all spiritual life, in the Soul; as the worm doth the kernel in the Nut: so that men are in this sense also *dead in trespasses and sins*.

Heb. 6. 1.

Heb. 9. 14.

4ly. Every natural man is dead in his principles and operations.

1. He wants a principle of spiritual life; Christ hath not breathed upon him, and said, *receive the spirit*, as he did upon the Disciples.

1 Kings 3.

Rom. 12. 1.

Hag. 2. 13, 14.

Tit. 1. 15.

Psalm 36. 9.

2. He is dead in his Operations, as well as Principles; his conscience is a nest of *dead works*: his very duties are dead works, his praying, his hearing, his alms, are but dead works, still born, like the Harlots child: every thought, and every word, and every work of a natural man, is infected and poisoned. His sacrifices to God, are like those in the Law, dead sacrifices: he offers not himself *a living sacrifice* to God, as Believers do. All his good works, good for the matter of them, are but carcases: they have body, but no Soul: they want Faith in Christ, and love to God, and the help of the spirit unto both. Except they had a principle of spiritual life, they can have no spiritual operations: *A clean thing cannot come out of an unclean: If one that is unclean touch any of these: that is Bread, or Pottage, or Oyl, or Wine, or any Meat, Shall it be clean? it shall be unclean: so is this people, and so is every work of their hands. And saith the Apostle, Unto them that are defiled, nothing is pure.* So that a natural man is a dead man every way, as to spiritual life. For he is removed from God, the fountain of life; *With thee is the fountain of life.* And he is dead in Law, through the guilt of sin that lyes upon him: and his

very

very Principles and Operations are dead things; he is a sink of sin and uncleanness; a Leper all over; *From the crown of the head, to the sole of the foot, there is no soundness, but bruises, and purifying sores.* The heart is as full of noisome lusts, as a dead Carcase of Worms. There is a Disease in every part, the Mind, the Will, the Affections. There is a *ἄναξία*, an evil state of Soul in every natural man. And when we see a man diseased all over, within and without, his very vitals decayed and rotten, we say, he is a dead man. And this is the true state of every man in a state of nature. And tho some may have painted outsides, as Tombs have; yet *within they are full of rottenness and uncleanness;* as Christ laid of the Scribes and Pharisees. Isa. I. 6. Matth. 23. 27.

Use 1. *First*, This informs us of the sad condition of every natural man; Tho we may not revile him, and call him a dead Dog, as *Abishai* did *Shimei*; yet we may truly call him a dead man. All his faculties are spiritually dead; his Judgment, and Will, and Affections, and Conscience: and so, all his works are dead works. A natural man is a sad Spectacle to a spiritual man; as a dead Corps is to one that looks upon it. Natural men may have Parts, and Gifts, and Morality; and yet all this may be but like painting, and garnishing of a lifeless Image. Some Pictures may be so accurately drawn, that they may at a glance seem alive; and others may be bungled, and yet all alike without life, the curious as well as the course. So men that have a very plausible outside, may be dead in sin, as well as those that are debauched. A Clock hath motion, as well as a man; but it is but an artificial motion; not from an inward Principle. And so a man may have a very fair outside, and look like a Religious man, and yet may be moved in Religion only by some outward Bias of credit or profit; by something of self, and not at all by the Grace of God. If you could see into his Principles, he hath never been humbled, nor removed from his own bottom at all. Consideration of self-interest may make a man seem zealous for God, as we see in *Jehu*. Oh the sad condition of these men, they are dead while they seem to be alive. Yea, they are twice dead, dead by nature, and self-murderers by Practice: *O Israel, thou hast destroyed thy self.* 2 Sam. 16. 9. 2 Kings 10. 1 Tim. 5. 6. Hos. 13. 9.

It was doleful to see one dead in every house throughout

Egypt, tho but for one night: Oh! how doleful is it to see most in a House, or in a Town dead, and to lie so for many days, or years together?

Eph. 5. 14.
Job 2. 4.

Use 2. *Secondly*, And therefore let me Exhort all men in this estate, to *arise and stand up from the dead*. *Skin for skin*, said the Devil; *and all that a man hath, will he give for his life*. And if a man will give so much for his natural Life, what should he do for his spiritual and eternal Life?

Quest. But can a dead man know that he is dead?

John 16. 8.
Exod. 12. 33.

Ans. Yes, a man that is spiritually dead may know that he is so. The Spirit can *convince men* of their sinful state. He can make a natural man say, I am a dead man, as the people said, *We are all dead men*.

Quest. But what shall a natural man do to recover Life?

John 5. 40.
John 5. 21.
John 14. 6.
John 11. 43, 44.
John 5. 25.
Verse 28.

Ans. Go to Christ for Life: *You will not come to me, that ye may have life. The son quickneth whom he will.* Christ is the life. When Jesus said to *Lazarus*, *arise*; he came out of his Grave. *The hour is come wherein*, saith our Saviour, *the dead shall hear the voice of the son of God, and they that hear, shall live*. Not only the dead in their Graves, but the dead in their sins. Christ hath a voice, that can make the dead Sinner hear and live; that is, believe in him to Life. *The life I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the son of God*, Gal. 2. 20.

Quest. But how should we come to Christ, that we may have Life?

John 11. 35:
Jer. 31. 21.

Ans. You must come weeping over your selves, as *Mary* and *Martha* did over *Lazarus*; and then Christ will weep over you, as he did over him, when he heareth you bemoaning your selves; then he also bemoans you, as the Lord did *Ephraim*.

Oh, lye in Christs way, as the people did that had Infirmities, offer your selves as objects of his pity; cry to him, *Lord, that I may receive my sight*. Lord, that I may receive Life. What Arguments did *David*, and *Heman*, and *Hezekiah*, plead

plead with against natural Death? Lord, in death there is no remembrance of thee. Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead? I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord in the Land of the living: It was spoken with tears. What Arguments then, should a poor Soul use against spiritual Death, that is a thousand times worse than natural Death? Natural Death is consistent with the Love of Christ, as we see in *Lazarus*; and with blessedness: *Blessed are the dead, that die in the Lord.* But spiritual Death is not, it is eternal Death begun. Psal. 6. 5.
Psal. 88. 10.
Isa. 38. 11.
Rev. 14. 13.

When a poor Soul cries out, I am a dead man, Death is mine, and Hell is mine; but oh that I might live in thy sight! as *Abraham* prayed for *Ishmael*: Now faith begins to work on Christ, the Prince of Life. As the Rulers Faith did, My daughter is even now dead; but come and lay thine hand upon her, and she shall live. And now comes in that Great and Almighty Power that raiseth from the dead. That Power that raised Christ from the dead, raiseth the Sinner from his state of Death. Remember then, that those that are spiritually dead, may have a sense of their state, and cry out for life in the use of Gods instituted means to obtain it. They must use the means, tho God alone gives them efficacy. Gen. 17. 18.
Mith. 9. 18.
1 Cor. 3. 6.

Oh then, let every dead Soul come to Christ for life. He hath a Life of Justification for you, which will swallow up the Condemnation you are under. And he hath a life of Grace and Holiness for you, which will swallow up the Law of Sin in you; tho not as yet, the being of sin, *sin that dwelleth in you.* The same Spirit of Holiness that was in Christ, he gives to you: *To every one of us, is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ.* And Christ hath a Life of Glory for you: *Eternal life is in his son. The glory which thou gavest me, I have given them. And father, I will that those whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am. And he that beleiveth on the son, hath everlasting life.* Rom. 8. 1.
Rom. 7:
Eph. 4. 7.
1 John 5. 11.
John 27. 22.
Verse 24.
John 3 36.

C H A P. XXVIII.

Wherein is shewed, That Conversion is a Resurrection from the dead. From the next Clause of the 24. Verse.

And is alive again.

Doct. **T**He spiritual meaning of these words, teacheth us; that the Conversion of a Sinner, is a Resurrection to Life again. As Christ said of himself; *I am he that liveth, and was dead.* And as it was said of the calling of the Jews, It will be *life from the dead*; so is it in the Conversion of a Sinner; it is a *passing from death to life*: God is the living God, and this distinguisheth him from the dead gods of the Heathens. And so Converts are, in the best sense, living Creatures.

Rev. 1. 18.
Rom. 11. 15.
1 John 3. 14.
Jer. 10. 10.
Psal. 115.

In opening this Doctrine, I shall shew what this Life is; to which a Sinner in Conversion is restored. And why it is called a Resurrection from the dead.

Eph. 4. 18.
2 Pet. 1. 4.
1 John 3. 9.
1 John 5. 18.
Gen. 5. 3.

What is this Life? It is spiritual Life, the Life of Grace and Holiness, the Life of God. The Apostle speakes of natural men; as *alienated from the life of God*. It is the *Divine nature, the seed of God*. And therefore Converts are said to be *begotten and born of God*. Begotten and born to the likeness of God; as *Adam* is said to have begotten a Son in his own likeness. And the way of conveying this Life to a Sinner in his Conversion, is by Union with Christ. As Philosophers define natural Life to be the Union of the Soul and Body; so spiritual Life is the Union of Christ and a Believer. Christ is his principle of life: *Not I, but Christ liveth in me: He is a quickening spirit.*

Gal. 2. 10.
1 Cor. 15. 45.

There are divers sorts of Life, whose Beings are founded in divers Causes. A vegetative Life is that of Plants, and lies in the vigor of the Sap. A sensitive Life is that of Beasts, and lies in the vigor of the Blood. A rational Life, is the Life of Man, and lies in

in the Union of Soul and Body. And spiritual Life, is the Life of Believers, and lies in their Union with Christ. And a Life of Glory, lies in *seeing God as he is, in living immediately with the Lord.* In living altogether upon God.

1 Cor. 13. 12.

1 Theff. 4. 18.

1 Cor. 15. 18.

Now as that which hath Life, is more excellent than that which hath not; so the several kinds of Life are more excellent one than another. Spiritual life, whereof we are speaking, excelleth not only the sensitive Life, but also rational, as it is corrupted by the Fall. It is *the life of God*, a Divine life, a life of Holiness, which made man like to God at first, and restores him to the likeness of God again. As the people said of *Paul* and *Barnabas*, after they had wrought a great Miracle, *The Gods are come down to us in the likeness of men*: So the spiritual Life,

Acts 14. 11.

Eph 4. 24.

which is called *the life of God*, makes men to be in the likeness of God. Now God doth not communicate this Life to Converts immediately, as he did to *Adam*; but by his Son the Mediator. *God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son: He that hath the Son, hath Life.* So that spiritual Life is a mans Union with Christ, *I am the life*, saith

1 Joh. 5. 11, 12.

John 14. 6.

Christ. This spiritual Life is the Effect of Christs Spirit, as well as the fruit of his merit. It is the fruit of his merit; for God doth not release a Sinner from Death, till his Debt be paid, and Justice satisfied. And had not Christ done this for a Sinner, he could not himself have risen from the dead: *He rose again for our justification.*

Rom. 4. 25.

And spiritual Life is an effect or work of the Spirit, which communicates to a man the Life of Christ, as Mediator: *He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you*: As the Artificer makes his curious work from the *Idea* he hath of it in his mind.

Joh. 16. 14.

But more particularly, This spiritual Life is a supernatural Power, that enables a man to move towards God, as his highest End. Therefore it is called *the life of God*, and we are said to be *alive to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord*. No natural man hath this Life, this Power, that enables him to move towards God as his highest end: He hath no higher end than himself, in his best works. And therefore self-denial was one of Christs great Doctrines he taught in his Ministry. *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself.* Philosophers say of Life in general, that *Vita est Vigor &*

Eph 4. 18.

Rom. 6. 11.

Match. 16. 24.

Actus;

Actus; it is a powerful, vigorous, and active thing. And spiritual Life is eminently such, *ὁ δὲ πνεῦμα ἐνεργεῖται*, saith the Apostle, 2 Cor. 4. 12. *Life worketh in you*; worketh powerfully, or effectually. Philosophers say also, That the actions of rational Life are four, *Intelligere, Sentire, Movere, Nutrire*; and some add a fifth, *Generare*. That is, in the Life of man, as man, there is a power of Understanding the nature of things natural, a power of Sensation, a power of Motion, a power of Nutrition, and a power of Generation. All which are likewise the properties of spiritual Life, and more than these.

There is a power of understanding and discerning the things of God, spiritual things: *God hath revealed these things to us by his spirit. And we have received the spirit which is of God, whereby we know the things that are freely given us of God. And the spiritual man judgeth all things*: The things of the spirit of God, which a natural man cannot.

And there is a power of sense and feeling: Spiritual Life feels the bitterness and weight of sin, and hath so quick a sense thereof, that it makes a man cry out, as *Paul*, *O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?* And spiritual life tasteth the sweetness of Gods word; *Thy word is sweeter to me than honey.* And it hath an eye to see the promises afar off. And it hath an ear to hear what the spirit speaks. And it hath a smell to savour the things of the spirit. *Thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the Virgins love thee.*

Again, Spiritual life hath the power of Motion and Action. It makes a man walk with God, as *Enoch* did, and to go from strength to strength. It makes him go about doing good, as our Lord Jesus Christ did. And spiritual life hath the power of Nutrition, it grows, that is, makes those that have it, to grow up in Christ, and to increase with the increase of God, Col. 2. 19.

And spiritual life hath a generative power. Grace is of a prolifical nature. *Paul*, a man full of the Life of God, begot the *Corinthians* to the Faith, and he begot *Onesimus* in his bonds. As some say, *Sol & Homo generant Hominem*; the Sun and Man beget man; so God and his Ministers beget Grace in men: God is the Principle, they are his Instruments: *We are θεοὶ ὁμοεργοί, workers together with God.* And

so

so in the exercise, as well as the first infusion of Grace: *Your zeal hath provoked many.* But more than all this, there is in spiritual life, an abiding power; it is an everlasting life, because it is from Christ the Fountain of Life. He *bath life in himself.* And *he is a quickning spirit*, which could not be said of the first *Adam*. Christ makes a man, whose life he is, to live for ever: *Because I live, ye shall live also.* Spiritual life in *Adam*, was like *Manna*, that was daily gathered, which was worm-eaten and corrupted, if gathered out of time or order. But spiritual life in Saints, is like *Manna* in the golden Pot, it corrupteth not.

2 Cor. 9. 2.

John 5. 26.

John 14. 19.

Exod. 16.

Exod. 16. 33.

Col. 3. 3.

Lastly, Spiritual life is a life much more serviceable and useful to God, than any other life. This is impli'd in the description before given of spiritual life, that it impowers a man to move towards God as his highest end. It is the life of God, not only as it is from him; but also as it carries a man to him, to walk with him, to live with him, and to live upon him.

Spiritual life, above any out of Heaven, makes a man a profitable creature, as *Paul* told *Philemon*, *Onesimus* was become after his Conversion. Men in their natural condition advance themselves, and not God. So did *Jehu*, a great pretender for God: *Come and see my zeal for the Lord of hosts.* But himself was his End, his own Honour, and the Establishment of his Kingdom; and that he had for four Generations, *ver. 30.* He had a reward suitable to his mind, in the work he did. But Grace advanceth God above self: *Not I, but the grace of God that was with me.* A gracious Soulefaith, as Christ said, *Father, glorifie thy name.* A spiritual man is full of the Will of God; Saith as Jesus Christ, *I come to do thy will, not my own.* He is amongst Gods *first fruits*. Now the first fruits were peculiarly Gods. God hath set him apart for himself. He is *holiness to the Lord*. He is amongst Gods first Born, which he hath consecrated to himself. So much for the Description of that spiritual life, the life of God, to which a Convert is restored.

Verse 11.

2 Kings 10. 15.

1 Cor. 15. 10.

John 12. 28.

Col. 4. 12.

Psal. 40. 8.

John 6. 38.

James 1. 18.

Exod. 23. 19.

Psal. 4. 2.

Jer. 2. 3.

Heb. 12. 23.

Secondly, Why is the Conversion of a Sinner called a Resurrection, a living again? The reason is, To shew whose the Power is by which it is wrought. There goes no less than

an Infinite Power to bring it about. There was no power in *Lazarus*, to joyn with Christ in his Resurrection. There is power in a natural man to oppose his Resurrection to a state of Grace, but nothing to help it. Spiritual life is the *Divine nature, the life of God, the seed of God, begotten of the will of God*. So that the Holy Ghost hath Consecrated the Terms of *Creation* and *Resurrection*, by which to express a mans Conversion, thereby to exclude all power but Gods in the work. God uses means about a Sinners conversion, but none in it. Christ may say in this respect, as well as in the point of Redemption: *I alone, and of the people there was none with me.*

Isaiah 63.

The Prophets *Elijah* and *Elisha*, raised the dead; but it was by the power of God. And the Apostles raised the dead, but it was by the Power of Christ, *through faith in his name*. And no less doth the Resurrection of the Soul need *that exceeding greatness of Gods power; the working of his mighty power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead.*

Acts 3. 16.

Eph. 1. 19, 20.

1 Tim. 5. 6.
Rev. 3. 1.

Use *First*, Let this put all men upon tryal. Many are certainly *dead, whilst they live*. They have a name to *live, and yet are dead*. Professors of Religion may live and die under a delusion. And therefore,

1. Look not only, nor so much, what you are without, as what you are within, for the discovery of your state towards God. View your Principles, as well as Actions. A Parret may speak, and a Watch, or a Poppet move; and so a man spiritually dead may do the actions of a man spiritually alive: he may profess Religion; and he may pray, and hear, and forbear much evil, and do much good: *Herod heard John gladly, and did many things*. Therefore it is your Principle that must decide the case. Consider whether you have a Principle of spiritual Life in you; such a Principle as may be called, *The life of God*, breathed into you by the Spirit of God; as it is said, *God breathed into man the breath of life, and he became a living soul*. Such a Principle of life as inclines you powerfully to live with God, and to live to him, as your highest end: So that you can say, *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee*. A man that hath this Principle of spiritual Life, is as

Mar. 6. 20.

Gen. 2. 7.

Psal. 73. 25.

if he had a new soul in him. Every man hath the Faculties of three souls, tho he have but one soul : he hath the faculties of the vegetative, sensitive, and Rational soul. But in conversion a man receiveth, as it were, the powers of another soul. As the King saw, besides three men, a fourth, like to the Son of God. So, besides the powers aforesaid, a man that is spiritually alive, Dan. 3. 25. receives those of a fourth and higher life, like to the life of the Son of God. So that a man is now plainly and sensibly what once he was not ; he finds all other powers and faculties subordinate to this life. The spiritual man now, is the man. When the world, or Satan, comes knocking at his heart, to be let in, as formerly ; they find another inhabitant, that hath no kindness, nor any entertainment for them. Oh consider, whether you have a principle of spiritual life ! You cannot date this from the time of your reforming a grosser course of life, and applying your selves onely to some visible Religion ; but you must make your estimate by a principle within, that makes you able, and inclines all your faculties, your mind, will, and affections, to move towards God, to live with him, and to him.

Oh judge not your selves by the goodliest outside ! The greatest Moralist may be much estranged from the life of Mar. 12. God. And therefore, when such a man is indeed converted to God, he seeth as great a change in himself, as the most profane man doth at his conversion, especially in the point of self-conceit, and self-confidence. The case is evident in *Paul*, he was such a man as we speak of ; before his conversion he lived a Pharisee, after the straitest Sect of their Religion : and then he verily thought himself alive, *I was alive without the Law once* : Rom. 7 9. That is, before I understood the holiness and spiritualness of it. But at his conversion to Jesus Christ, when the Law came close to his conscience, then he found himself a dead man ; and that to be sin, which he thought not to be a sin before ; that is, inward concupiscence and self-confidence, or trusting to his own righteousness. He now mightily changed his thoughts of his former self ; *What things were gain to him* Phil 3. 7. before his conversion ; after, he counted *loss for Christ*, his Zech 3 3. own righteousness now, was like rags, like *Joshua's* filthy garments.

2ly. Spiritual life cannot subsist on such things, as other lives can: as it is a more excellent life than others; so it is supported by more excellent things. The life of Plants is preserved and nourished by the ground; and the life of beasts, by the grass of the field; and the life of man, by other creatures. But spiritual life, which is the life of Saints, lives upon God himself: *When there is no fruit in the vine, nor blossom on the fig tree, nor flock in the fold, nor herd in the stall; yet I will rejoyce in the Lord, and joy in the God of my salvation.*

Hab. 3. 17, 18

Job 23. 12.

Psal. 119. 103.

Matth. 4. 4.

Gal. 2. 20.

Joh 4. 32, 33.

Cant. 5.

And spiritual life is sustained by the word of God: *I have esteemed thy word more than my necessary food. Thy word is sweet to my tast. Man lives not by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. This life lives upon Christ. The life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God. As Christ said, I have meat to eat, that ye know not of: and, my meat is to do the will of him that sent me. So it is with a man that hath spiritual life, he cannot live without Sabbaths and Ordinances; nor without Christ, as we see in the spouse.*

Spiritual life, and spiritual meat, and spiritual converse, suite best together. Yea grace, even about carnal things, converteth spiritually. And therefore, in some respects, a man after conversion, tho he live not so much on the creature, as he did before; yet he tasteth more sweetness in his creature-enjoyments than before: as *Jeremiah* said, *my sleep was sweet to me.* And the reason is, because he now enjoys his creature-comforts, as they are Christs purchase for him, and refined by Christ. *All are yours, and you are Christs.* What he hath of the creature, be it much or little, it tastes of Christ; and this makes it sweet to him.

Jer. 31. 26.

1 Cor. 3. 23.

2 Cor. 5. 17.

Eze. 36. 25.

3ly. Remember what spiritual life is: as natural life is the union of Soul and body; so spiritual life is our union with Christ. And you must know this union with Christ, by the new-Creature: *If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.* And you may know the new-creature in you, by the new-covenant, by a New-covenant-heart in you, which is a tender heart, *a heart of flesh, a heart that knows God; They shall*

all know me from the greatest to the least: That is, they shall know me from all other Gods, and they shall know me in my relation to them to be their God. And a heart to love God; *I will circumcise thy heart, that thou maist love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul:* And a heart that hath the law of God in it. So that their work, and their delight is to obey the will of God.

Consider moreover, how this union came about. Christ is conceived in mens hearts, as in the Virgins womb, by the Holy-Ghost, on Gods part; and by assent, on ours: *Be it as thou hast said, saith Mary.* There is in our union with Christ a mutual consent: *My beloved is mine, and I am his:* And, *I am my beloveds, and my beloved is mine.* And hereupon, there is a mutual sympathy: Christ is very sensibly affected with our infirmities. And we are affected with his excellency: *Yea, doubtless, I count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ.* Lastly, In this union there is one spirit in Christ and us; *He that is joined to the Lord, is one spirit.* It is the spirit of Christ that acteth us in prayer and every other duty. There is a propensity and tendency in us to walk as Christ did; and to move towards him, and to live to him, on whom we live.

2. Use, *Secondly,* This Doctrine is useful to exhortation.

1. To you that are alive again, and have this Life of God in Christ: Oh live after the manner of this life: It lies in Grace and Comfort; and you may act the one, when you feel not the other: O, do the actions of spiritual life: One man may live more of this life in a day, than others in many days.

Spiritual life is a powerful life; it is so in motion towards God, and action for God, and so many of our actions as are not of this nature, are dead and lost. All you do in Religion it self, that points not to God, they are dead work; gilt over as counterfeited money, but the metal is base. You will be saved as by fire, with much difficulty: Dead duties, and dead works are utterly unbecoming men that have spiritual life: Christ in you is a quickning spirit; and the root that beareth you, is full of Sap. There may be numbness where there is natural life; and so also where there is spiritual life: A man that hath spiritual life, may slumber and sleep; so did the Spouse; so did the five wise

Rev. 3. 1.

Virgins. The things of God in you, may be *ready to dye*. Therefore rub and chafe your selves, till you get more warmth and heat into your hearts and affections to things above : that you may live more to God, and make it manifest, *That your deeds are wrought in God*. Oh live above the life of fence, yea, above the life of carnal Reason. If you live sensual lives, you are but beasts, and many are so : *man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the Beasts that perish*. And if you live onely a Life of Corrupt Reason, you are but men : *Are ye not carnal, and walk as men?*

Ioh. 3 21.

Pl. 49.

2 Cor. 3. 3.

Let spiritual life be of highest esteem with you : And for your encouragement know this, that as you have a capacity to do such excellent Things, as other men that are without this life cannot do ; so you have a capacity for such joy and delight, that other men have not. As man hath a Capacity for those Delights which a Beast hath not ; so a Saint hath a capacity for that joy and delight that a natural man hath not, nor can have. He is capable of *fellowship with God* ; of *joy unspeakable and full of Glory* ; and of *Peace which passeth all understanding*.

1 Joh. 1. 3.

1 Pet. 1 8.

Philip 4. 7.

1 Pet. 3. 7.

Pl. 14. 3.

2ly. The Doctrine is useful to exhort those that have not yet this spiritual life, that are not alive again. Oh labour to be *Heirs together of the Grace of life*. Dead bodies are loathsome things. *Abraham* could not bear the sight of his dead Wife without trouble and grief ; Let me bury *my Dead out of my sight*, Gen. 23. what then are dead Souls ? they are filthy, stinking things.

Quest. But wherein lyes spiritual death ?

Zech. 3. 11.

Answer. Not only in an Impotency to do good spiritually ; but more than this, It lyes in refusing good, and choosing evil wilfully. Now where there is this latter, God loaths such Souls ; *my Soul loathed them, and their Soul also abhorred me*.

Ezec. 16. 6.

But where there is only the former, an Impotency to do good spiritually, God is moved to pity. *When I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thy own blood ; I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, live ; yea I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, live ; where there is not Affected Ignorance, and wretched willfulness, and the sinner doth not harden himself against God ; there*

there God pitieth. And consider, that Christ's terms of raising dead souls to life, are not harsh and discouraging: *Come unto me, that ye may have life. Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live.* John 5. 11a. 55. 3.

And suppose thou hast been long dead; yet Christ can give thee Life. He did not onely raise the Maid that lay dead in her fathers house; and the young man that was laid dead on the bier; but he also raised *Lazarus*, who had been dead and in his grave four days; Christ can raise dead Souls that have been long in the grave, unto Life: *The hour is coming, yea now is, that the dead shall hear the voice of the son of God; and they that hear shall live.* Matt. 9. 25. Luk 7. 14. John 11.

Indeed Jesus wept, and groaned, and prayed, at his raising of *Lazarus*. Oh think of it, you that are alive, that it hath cost Jesus Christ prayers, and tears, and groans, to raise your dead Souls to life. And you that are dead, think of this, that this Life is the seeds-time of Eternity. If thou dyest spiritually dead, thou art a dead man to all Eternity: but if thou art alive to God through Jesus Christ, this is the beginning of Eternal life. So much for the former part of Verse the 24. *This my Son was dead, and is alive again.* John 11. 35, 38, 41.

A P. X X I X.

Sheweth, That every man by nature is a lost man: yet at his Conversion found again. From the latter part of the 24th Verse,

He was lost, and is found.

THIS variety of expressions our Saviour used, to make us the better to understand and consider the wretchedness of our natural estate, and the blessedness of a spiritual state.

And he was lost, that is in a perishing state, bound over to damnation, *John 3. 18.* And from the words above, we are particularly taught,

Doct.

Dott. That every man in his natural condition is a lost man, in a perishing state, bound over to damnation, none excepted, not the elect themselves, *All we like sheep have gone astray.* Before conversion they may say as the Apostle, comparing the Jews with the Gentiles; What then are we better then others? No; in no wise; for all are lost, all were hewen from the same Rock; *Adam was Pauls Root* that bare him as well as *Judas.*

Matt. 18. 11. *Jesus Christ came to seek and save none but those that were lost.*
Gal. 3. 23. *The scripture hath concluded all under sin. And we were by nature the children of wrath as well as others.* Every man in his natural state may be called a man of sin, tho not the man of sin, as Antichrist was; and a Son of Perdition, tho not the Son of Perdition, as *Judas* was.

I shall open the point in these three things.

First, That men by nature have lost themselves.

Secondly, They have lost God.

And Thirdly, God hath lost them.

First, We have lost our selves; our estate of Innocency; The Divine Image after which we were made. We lost our Divine Knowledge, Righteousness, and Holiness. We lost our Possibility of not dying: we are irrecoverably under the sentence of the first death; and by nature under the sentence of the second death; every natural man is in a perishing condition, tho an elect vessel; as the People of Israel were to confess of their Father *Jacob*, *A Syrian ready to perish was my father*: first in his cruel servitude under *Laban* in Syria; and *Gen. 31. 40.* after he came into *Canaan*, by the Famine there: *why do you look one upon another? go down to Egypt to buy corn, lest we die.*
Gen. 42. 1, 2.

The Holy Ghost sets out the lost estate of men unconverted many ways; they are said to sit in darkness and the shadow of death; Yea, to be darkness it self; *Ye were sometimes darkness, woful wanderers. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek them out.* And gropers: *They grope at noon-day, as in the night we grope as if we had no eyes, we stumble at noon-day, as in the night.* And so *Paul* speaks of men by nature, to the Philosophers and Learned Heathens with whom he disputed,

Eph. 5. 8.
Ezec. 34. 6.

Job 5. 14.
Isa. 59. 10.

puted, that they can but feel, or grope after God by all the light of nature: *If happily they may grope after him, and find him.* That is, take notice of God in his Providences. Man hath so far lost himself, that he hath not only lost Grace, but Reason; he is in his natural state like the beasts that perish: he leads a meer sensual life. *Man being in honour abideth not, he is like the beasts that perish.* It was said of Nebuchadnezzar, that he had the heart of a beast.

Acts 17. 27.
Psal. 49. 12.
Dan. 4. 16.
Matt. 16. 26.
Gen. 2. 7.

Every natural man hath lost his Soul, which is of more worth than all the world; as Christ himself hath valued it. It was breathed into Man by God: and he passed it away to the Devil, when he believed the Serpent rather than God. The Prince of the power of the air is in possession of every natural mans Soul; and works mightily in him. Thus man hath lost himself wholly in his spirituals; and very much in his naturals.

Eph. 2. 2.

Secondly, Every man in his natural condition hath lost God. *He hath changed his God;* as the Prophet said the Jews had done. Natural men have many Gods, *They set up idols in their hearts.* Some worship the Host of Heaven; yea, the basest of Creatures, flocks and stones. *Saying to a stock Thou art my father; and to a stone, Thou hast begotten me.* Yea some have worshipped Devils. *They sacrificed to Devils, to Gods that came newly up.* And all make their lusts their Gods: *Whose God is their belly.* Those three sorts of lusts, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, are the natural mans Trinity. Carnal men have no acquaintance with God, they are strangers to him; and so far, that they are said to be without God in the world. Nay, they desire not to know God. *They say unto God, depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.* They say so in their hearts, tho not with their tongues: *The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God:* he wished it, and lives at that rate as if there were none. As the Apostle saith to Titus, *In words they profess they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, & disobedient, and to every good work reprobate,* or void of Judgment.

Jer. 2. 11.
Ezec. 14. 3, 4.
Jer. 2. 27.
Deut. 32. 17.
1 Cor. 10. 20.
Rev. 9. 20.
Rev. 2. 9.
Phil. 3. 19.
1 John 2. 16.

Eph. 2. 12.
Job 21. 14.

Psal. 14. 1.
2 Tir. 1. 16.

Thirdly, as natural men have lost themselves, and lost God, so God hath lost them. He calls them, *Do-ammi, ye are not my people.* God cast off all men, upon the fall, as he did the Jews upon their unbelief. He drove Adam out of the Garden

Hos. 1. 6.
Rom. 11. 24.
Gen. 3. 24.
Gen. 4. 14.
of Isa. 49 21.

of his presence, and from the Tree of Life, into the wide World. And *Cain* was driven out of his presence, and became a vagabond. The Lord may say to all men, in their natural condition, as the Church said, *I have lost my children*. God can find none of his Children in *Adam*: and therefore he begets to himself new Children in *Jesus Christ*, the new *Adam*.

I come now to the Reasons, why all men by nature are in a lost condition.

Reas. 1. Our Representative, in whose loins we are, was left to his choice at first, to stay with God, or leave him; and he chose the latter. He thought to mend himself, to find out a better state, and so lost that in which he was Created. It is the nature of rational Creatures, Men and Angels, to be inconstant. All left their first estate, that were left to themselves: *Behold, he put no trust in his servants, and his angels he charged with folly*. The nature of man is like *Reuben*, *Unstable as water*. *God made man upright, but he sought out many inventions*. God made him plain hearted, without guile, as *Jesus* said of *Nathaniel*: but he fell presently upon making experiments of his own. And now there was not so great a change, when *Lots* Wife was turned into a Pillar of Salt, as there was in man, when on a sudden he lost himself, and lost God.

Job 4. 18.
Gen. 49. 4.

Ecc. 7. 29.
John 1. 47.

Hos. 13. 9.
Matt. 23. 37.
Jer. 18. 12.

Ezec. 33. 11.

Matt. 26. 24.

Reas. 2. As mans sickness, so his wilfulness brought, and hath kept him in his lost estate. The will is the faculty that brings all men under condemnation. God was under no blame in mans fall; man would do what he did: *O Israel, thy destruction is of thy self*. *Jerusalem* would not be found; *How often would I have gathered you, and ye would not? There is no hope, say the Jews, but we will walk after our own devices*. Man is a desperate Creature, by nature, as well as the Devil. *Ahi-tophel* hanged himself: and so man damns himself: *why will ye die?* Man will do things against the light of nature and conscience; and against all counsel and caution. Tho *Judas* was plainly told, he was the man that should betray *Christ*; and *wo be to that man that did it*: yet he desperately goes on to be the son of perdition.

USE 1. This shews you what extream danger men are in whilst in a state of nature; they are lost Creatures: You know that lost or wandering sheep, above all Creatures, expose themselves to the danger of the Wolf, and other ravenous-Beasts. Thus man by leaving God hath exposed himself to the greatest dangers and hazards. The Law curseth him as he goes up and down, as *Shimei* did *David*, even in his troubles. So the Law hath no pity on lost men, no not in his greatest afflictions; but still curseth him: *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them.* And they are a prey to Wolves in sheeps clothing. Christ told the Scribes and Pharisees, that they made their profelites *twofold more the children of Hell than themselves.*

John 10. 12.
1 Sam. 17. 34.

Gal. 3. 10.

Matt. 23. 15.

Every Hypocrite damns himself deep in Hell by his only appearing to be Godly. When great damnation is spoken of by Jesus Christ, it is assigned to the Devils, and to Hypocrites. Whilst a man is in his lost estate, the Devil makes a prey of him; *leads him captive at his will:* doth what he will with his heart, and affections, and conscience. As Jesus suffered the Devil to set him upon a Pinacle of the Temple, in his state of Humiliation; so natural men let the Devil hurry their thoughts, and all the powers of their Souls into dangerous places, and upon dangerous objects. And so, tho they be lost, yet *their sins find them out*, and Conscience dogs them, when God lets it loose, and becomes to them a Hell upon Earth.

Matt. 24. 25.

2 Tim. 2. 26.

Matthew 4.

Numb. 32.

2. This shews us what a stranger man is to himself, as well as to God; he is such a stranger to his own misery, that he sees it, he feels it not. *Ephraim had gray hairs, and knew it not.* Wicked men are *past feeling, and the God of this world hath blinded their minds.* *Are we blind also?* Say the Pharisees to Christ. *Blessed be thou of the Lord, saith Saul, I have done the commandment of the Lord. I am rich, saith the Apostate Church, and need nothing.* Their hearts are deceitful. They are meer dreamers, as to their condition towards God. How many men die in a dream? As some men go away in a swoond. And man is wilful in all this: *We will every one do the imagination of his evil heart.* How strange a thing therefore, that any man acquainted with Scripture, and the Corruption of Humane Nature, should think mans Will able and fit to determine

Hosea 7. 9.
Eph. 4. 19.
2 Cor. 4: 4.
John 9. 40.
1 Sam. 15: 15.
Rev. 4. 17.
Jer. 17. 9.
Isaiah 29.

Jer. 18. 12.

Gods Decree of Election, and Gods Work in Conversion. As tho man since the fall had a better will than in his state of Innocency; whereas it is sufficiently evident, that it is the genius of mans will in his natural state, to move cross to the Will of God. Whilst the ceremonial Law was Gods Institution, the Jews counted *the honourable things of his law, a strange thing*; but after God had annulled it, then they were stiff for it, as for Circumcision and other Ceremonial Rites.

Hosea 8. 12.

✕ Use 2. This calls men to observe well if they be not still in the state of nature. All those from whom the Gospel is hid, are certainly in a lost and perishing condition. *If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.* Men in a state of nature may receive the Gospel in the Letter; but if a man receive not the Gospel in the power of it, he is in a lost condition: *Our Gospel came to you, not in word only, but in power.* And when the Gospel comes to men in power, it transforms them into its likeness, and into the likeness of Christ. *We all with open face beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory.* Till thou hast a Gospel-Spirit and Life, and a Disposition and Conversation in some measure answering to Jesus Christ when he was here in our flesh; the power of the Gospel yet is hid from thee, and it is too evident thou art yet lost.

2 Cor. 4. 3.

1 Thess. 1. 5.

2 Cor. 3. 18.

Judges 11.

Luke 19. 10.

Matth. 9. 12.

But when thou art come to this, to see and feel and bewail thy lost condition, as the Daughters of *Israel* bewailed the loss of *Jephthah's* Daughter; This is a sign Christ is seeking of thee: *The son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.* They are the sick that need the Physician.

Psalms 119.

✕ 2. This may exhort all that are in adoubtful state, to seek; that they may be found. When men have lost themselves, they will shout till they make somebody hear to direct them into their way. Thus let poor Souls that are lost, cry to God mightily, that they may be sought and found. Oh pray as *David* did, *Lord I have gone astray like a lost sheep, seek thy servant.* Man is not able to find his way to God, he is a bewildered Creature. If ever a Sinner be found, Christ must

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must find him. God hath no more Sons to die for lost Sinners.

Think of this, God bestows many thoughts on lost Sinners: *He looketh upon men, and if he hear them say, I have sinned and perverted my way:* Oh then he sends Christ to seek and find out this lost Sinner. Job 33. 27.

And to provoke you hereto, Consider that it is a foolish thing for a man to lose his Soul: *What will it profit a man to gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be taken from thee.* He that loseth his Soul, loseth God too, and Christ, and the society of Saints and Angels for ever. The punishment of loss, will be as great, if not greater, as some think, than that of sense. Cains loss, and Sauls loss of the Presence of God, was their torment, as Absolom's loss of the Kings Face was his. How do the Saints lament the loss of Gods Face for one night? *Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.* Yea, how did Jesus Christ himself cry out under the loss of God? *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* He changed not his countenance at all for the cruel and scornful usage he met with, after his being apprehended, and upon the Cross; but the loss of God made him to cry out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Certainly, the thoughts which the damned in Hell have of Heaven, its being offered them, will increase their torment. Where there is pain, we point with our fingers, and so where there is loss, we point with our thoughts. The memory and conception of the damned, will in all probability be enlarged, in thinking of their state here on Earth, and what offers of Mercy and Grace they had here, and refused them: Which will infinitely encrease their torments: *Son, remember, that thou in thy life time receivest thy good things.* Matth. 16. 26. Luc. 12. 20. 2 Sam. 14. Plal. 30. 7. Matth. 27.]

Thus much for the first Point, That all men are in a lost estate before their Conversion.

Doct. 2. Now follows the second, That in Conversion a lost Sinner is found again.

And First, a Sinner is sought, that he may be found, so are not lost Angels. *God looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; he will deliver his soul from going into the pit,* Job 33.

and his life shall see the light. But lost Angels have no call to Repentance, nor offer of mercy, as man hath.

Qu. But where are lost Sinners found, when they are sought?

Ans. In as bad a place as can be out of Hell: *He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness. He is found a brother to dragons, and a companion to owls;* as you have the expressions in *Job 30. 29.* He is found a Companion of Devils, as that man *Marke 5. Luke 8.* and conversing with *unclean Spirits.* He is found in his blood. Conversion finds no man in a cleanly case: It found *Paul* persecuting the Saints. And tho Conversion do not find every Sinner so bad outwardly, yet it finds all as bad within as *Saul* was. It finds the greatest Moralist at as great a distance from God, and having as great enmity against him, as the vilest Sinner in the World.

Acts 9.
Acts 20.

Thirdly, What is it for a Sinner to be found?

1. To be stopped in his way and career of sinning, as *Paul* was.

2. To be brought back to God by Repentance, and to Christ by Faith. To be found in Christ, as in a new *Adam*; and so found a new man, *renewed in the spirit of his mind.* And in a new Covenant with God. The Conversion of a Sinner hath all this in it.

Job 33. 24.

Fourthly, Who finds the lost Sinner? He is not able to find his way back to God, no more than a wandering Sheep can find its way home. A lost Sinner is in this respect a silly creature, he must be sought. And God is so tender of him, and so willing that he should return to him, that he himself provides one to seek and find him. *I have found a ransom.* Where? In his own bosom, by consultation with himself: It is his own Invention; he hath found a way to satisfy himself, and save Sinners too. *Darius* sought to find a Ransom for *Daniel*, but could not. But God hath found a Ransom. The *Hebrew* word signifieth a covering, typified by the Mercy-Seat that covered the Ark where the Law was, that curseth every Sinner out of Christ. If Men and Angels had sate in Council to this day, they could not have found a Ransom for lost Sinners: they may say, as in *Job*, all the Creatures said of Wisdom, *It is not in us.* Angels desire to look into this thing,

Dan. 6. 15.

Exod. 25. 21.

as

as being worth their wonder : Which was shadowed by the Cherubims looking down on the Mercy-Seat : There is Mystery enough in it, for Angels to admire : *Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness——seen of Angels.*

1 Pet. 1. 12.
Exod. 25. 20.
1 Tm. 3. 16.

Quest. And who is the ransom that God hath provided for lost sinners, to find them, and bring them home to him ?

Ans. Jesus Christ, and only He : There is none joined with him herein : *I alone, and of the people there was none with me. There is no name under heaven by which we can be saved, but by the name of Jesus. The Son of man is come to save that which was lost.* One Adam lost all, and another must find all that are found. And Jesus Christ doth three things in seeking and recovering lost sinners.

Isa. 63. 3.
Acts 4.

1. He pays a ransom to God for them : Therefore God saith, *I have found a ransom.* Gods Justice must be satisfied, as well as his mercy glorified : There must be Blood, precious Blood, even the Blood of Christ to ransom sinners.

Math. 18. 11.
Luke 19. 10.

2. Christ prays, as well as pays, before he finds and recovers lost sinners, *I pray for them also, that shall believe in me through their word.* Those other sheep that are yet straying, *I pray for them, that they may be one with us.* And his prayer can do that which Noahs, Daniels, and Joels could not do, nor the prayers of Moses and Samuel.

1 Pet. 1. 19.

John 17. 20.
John 10. 16.

Ez. 14. 14.
Jer. 15. 1.

3. After both these, he is fain to rescue every sinner by power ; he recovers them from the power of Satan, as David did his Fathers Lamb, from the Bear and the Lyon.

Acts 26. 18.
1 Sam. 17. 34.

USE 1. This should teach us to wonder at the care of God and Christ about lost sinners. Observe that, in *Isa. 65. 1. I am found of them that sought me not.* Christ is the seeker, and not the sinner : *I said, behold me, behold me, to a nation that was not called by name.* Christs seeking and finding out a lost sinner is a wonderful thing ; and it is our stupidity that we do not admire and contemplate it more. There are all dimensions of love and tenderness in it ; *breadth and length, and depth and height.* Oh you that were lost, admire and wonder at it, that ever you should be found.

Eph. 3. 28.

Use 2. Examine whether you are found or not : All were lost ; *All we have gone astray ;* if Christ have found you, then you are his, *Thou gavest them me,* saith Christ to his Father : and *John 17. 16. they*

Isa. 53. 6.

- Gal. 5. 24. they that are Christs, *have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts*. They will crucifie that, for which he was crucified : If you are Christs; you will put that sin which remains in you, to open shame, as your sins did Christ ; you will complain of it to God, as the vilest thing in the world, and you will loath your selves for it ; you will be gradually putting sin to death ; as the Lord drove the Nations out before *Israel*. If Christ have sought and found you, you are his sheep ; you were wandering sheep before, but now you are his : And saith he, *My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me*. The sheep follow the Lamb : If Christ have found you, you tread in his steps ; you are *Imitators of Christ*, and have a desire, to do whatever he bids you.
- Deut. 7. 22. 3. Take heed of losing your selves again : It is true, when you are once found, you cannot be utterly lost again : If you should, Christ would not discharge his undertaking ; But he will do this, *Those that thou gavest me, I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition*. And, *This is the Fathers will, that of all that he hath given me, I should lose nothing*. Christ keeps them, and he prays his Father to keep them. Yet you may lose Christ, and be lost in part, and for a time. The Spouse lost her beloved, *I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone*. Tho you may not lose your right to Christ ; *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?* Yet you may lose your sight of Christ ; and it may cost you dear to find him again : *I sought him, but I found him not ; I called him, but he gave me no answer*. If you carelessly lose the sight of Christ, you may have a sorrowful seeking of him ; as his Father and Mother had : My Brethren, take heed of *losing the things that ye have wrought, of leaving your first love to Christ, and the things of Christ* ; however God will heal your backslidings, yet it may be by a smarting plaister.
- John 10. 27. And if you would not wander in your hearts or ways,
- 1 Pet. 2. 21. 1 Cor. 11. 1. John 2. 5. John 17. 12. John 6. 39. John 17. 11. Cant. 5. 6. Rom. 8. 35, 36. Cant. 3. 1. Cant. 5. 6. Luke 2. 48. Rev. 2. 4. Hof. 13. 4.

1. Make the Scriptures your boundaries, and let them speak their own sense : *Te err*, saith Christ, *not knowing the Scriptures*.

Math. 29. 2. Abuse your own righteousness, and exalt the righteousness of Christ ; this is the way to be found in him ; God will never find you in Christ, so long as you are exalters of your own Righteousness.

3. Get

3. Get and keep under the teaching and leading Office of the Spirit, as it is the promise of the Father, and the Son: John 16. 13. *He shall lead you into all truth; and he shall teach you all things.* & 14. 26. Thus I have finished this part of the Parable, containing the transaction betwixt the Father and the younger Son.

C H A P. XXX.

Giveth the Explication of the 25th and 26th Verses, and the Doctrines thence arising.

V. 25. Now his elder son was in the field, and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing.

V. 26. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant?

I Come now to the last part of this famous Parable, namely, the Elder Sons, which he acts in an envious distaste of his younger Brothers great Entertainment. First, with a servant of the house in these two Verses, and afterwards with his Father.

Now his elder Son, &c. That is, In general, the Jewish Nation; *I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is my first-born.* Jer. 3. 9.

But particularly, the Scribes and Pharisees, who were men of the greatest remark and note amongst the Jews; These were the men that murmured at Jesus Christ for receiving sinners, and eating with them. Christs affable deportment towards re- Luc. 15. 2.

penting Publicans and sinners, was a great offence to the Scribes and Pharisees. Now both the Younger and Elder Son, are the Type of natural men; yet with this great difference; the younger Son is the representative of those that repent; the Elder of those who are so conceited of themselves, as to think they need no re- Luc. 15. 7.

Now his Elder Son was in the field: He was absent at his brothers return and entertainment by his Father. Absence Doct. from seasons of Grace, is of evil consequence. Thomas was absent John 20. 24.

sent when Jesus first appeared to his Disciples after his Resurrection. The occasion of his absence, and whether justifiable or no, is not written ; but the inconvenience he suffered by it is, he was the hardest of belief, *Except I see in his hands the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.*

v. 25.

It was a blot Christ hath left sticking on *Martha*, that her younger Sister *Mary* made the better choice, even *that good part, that should not be taken from her.* And how came it about? *Martha was cumbered about much serving, whilst Mary sat at Jesus his feet. All his Saints sit down at his feet to receive of his words.* Saints are bred up at the feet of God, as *Paul* was at *Gamaliels*. The Spouse brought upon her self much grief and sorrow in slighting the opportunity that was offered her for Communion with Christ ; *Open to me, my sister, my love ; saith Christ ; I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on ? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them ?* saith the Spouse. But what saith she next? *I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had withdrawn himself and was gone ; I sought him, but I could not find him ; I called him, but he gave me no answer.* Oh therefore, watch the dispensations and seasons of Grace ; as the infirm people did the seasons of the Angels troubling the water : You have worse infirmities than they had. Watch for the spirits moving upon seasons of Grace for your healing ; fear and tremble at those words of Christ, *If thou hadst known, even thou at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes.*

Luc. 10. 41, 42

v. 39, 40.

Deut. 33. 3.

Cant. 5. 2, 3.

v. 6.

John 5.

Luc. 19.

Gen. 24.

Matthew 6. 5.

Now his elder Son was in the field: A place of work, he had been busie at work there, not meditating or praying, as *Isaac*. The *Pharisees* did not use to pray alone, but before men, in the Synagogues and streets, that they might be seen : He was in the field at work.

Doct. The confidence of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* was in their works ; and so is every mans naturally.

The *Jews* looked on themselves as under the covenant of works, and they were for Justification by their own works, by the works of the law : *Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life ?* They sought Righteousness by the works of the Law : Justification by faith in anothers Righteousness, was a new and a strange Doctrine to the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* : Many men that have so much Religion, as to mind another world, and seek after Heaven, as he did, *Matth.*

Matth. 19 16.

Rom. 9. 32.

19. Yet they commonly seek it only by works. They look more to their own purchase of Heaven, than to Christ. *They trust to themselves that they are righteous.* As *Naaman* valued the Rivers of *Damascus*, above the Waters of *Israel*; so do natural men their own works above Christ. They look on Righteousness by Faith in Christ as a meer Notion; and bring down Religion, and the Mysteries of the Scriptures, to the censure of carnal Reason. They would not have Heaven as a gift, but for their price, as that Jesuit said, *Cælum gratis non accipiam*: I will have Heaven for my Money. It is true, *Vega.* Heaven is the purchase of Christ. But it is a free-gift to us: *The gift of God is eternal life.* It hath been, and is a great design of the Devil, and the man of sin; and I may add, of *Socinians*, and others of their Spirit; I say, it is a design which these drive on, to have men as little beholden to Christ for Salvation, as may be. Something of self, is the Idol that these men set up in their hearts: they cannot bear self-denial to follow Christ. His imputed Righteousness, is either babling, as *Pauls* discourse of Jesus and the Resurrection was to the learned Philosophers; or a Riddle, as Christ's words usually were to the *Jews*. *Luc 18. 9. 2 Kings 2. 5. Eph. 1. 14. Rom 6. 23. Acts 17. 18.*

The *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, and their Heirs, and Allyes, to this day, would have something or other in themselves, to commend them to God, without Christ; or at least to be joined with him. This is the Pride of mans heart, he is so proud a creature, that he would be as God. *Vain man, as Zopher said, would be wise: That is, wise as God.* That was the drift of *Job* 11. 12. man in eating of the Forbidden Fruit. *Gen. 3.*

But if men can save themselves, God might have spared Christ; Christ, as *St Paul* saith in another case, then died in vain, and our faith is vain. It may then be said of his death and sufferings, as *Judas* did of *Marys* Box of Ointment, *To what purpose is this waste?* Men that Proudly think this, they do in effect tell Jesus Christ, he might have kept his kindness to himself. *Cor. 1. 13.*

Alas! if these men had any experience of the burden of sin, and of a wounded conscience, they would then see they must inevitably perish without the Death and Righteousness of Christ. *O that I may be found in Christ, not having my own righteousness,* would be their Language, as well as *Pauls*. *Philip 3. 9.*

Paul was once as great a doter on self-righteousness as any, till he came, to be a convicted and condemned person by the Law:
 Rom. 7. 9. *I was once alive without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived; and I died. O then for Christs Righteousness, for the righteousness of God, which is through faith in Christ. It is true, the Gospel would have them that beleave, to maintain good works; to be fruitful; for faith without works is dead; but tho the Apostle would have them to have works to justify their Faith; yet not to justify their persons; he doth not commend works to them for merit, but for duty. If the former, they would take Christs office out of his hands. Never any merited but Christ. But these men can overlook that of our*
 Luke 17. 9, 10. *Saviour. Doth the master thank the servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not: so likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things that are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants; we have done that which is our duty. Christ forelaw, that these men would be opening Heaven with the old Key, tho God had set on a new Lock. God hath made a new way to the holy of holies.*

My brethren, I beseech you beware of this Leaven of the Pharisees; and mind you the Covenant of Grace. This will put you upon good works, as well as the Covenant of Works: not in your justification, but that which ever accompanies it, your Sanctification; the Covenant of Grace is conducing, as to your greatest comfort, so to your greatest Holiness: It writes the law of God in your hearts, and causeth you to walk in his statutes.

It then follows; And as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing.

These ceremonies were used in those countries at their solemn Feasts: so that the words hold forth, that the Scribes and Pharisees heard the glad tidings of the Gospel which Jesus Christ Preached to repenting and believing sinners.

And thus Christ sets forth the offers of himself, his Grace, and Pardon to the Jews: we have piped to you, and ye have not danced: you have rejected my offers of Pardon and Salvation upon your Repentance, and believing in me. And as the Jews heard Christ, and his Gospel-Invitations; so all the Nations of the World have heard this Musick and Dancing, or shall do it.

And

And he called one of the servants; and asked what these things meant. Here we see, that though they heard, yet they did not understand Christ's offers of Gospel Grace. And this was Gods great Judgment upon that People, prophesied Isa. 6. 9. of: *In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which saith, hearing they shall hear, and shall not understand.* Christ in his Ministry was a *Barbarian* to them; as *St. Paul* speaks of those that used an unknown tongue in the Church. Matt. 13. 40.

And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. It may be, that *John the Baptist* is here intended: for we find the *Pharisees* enquired much of him, and asked him many questions about himself, and Christ. The *Jews* sent Priests and Levites from *Jerusalem*, to ask *John whether he was, the Christ?* This was but to make way, to list him about Christ and his Doctrine: and these were of the *Pharisees*. And so they often asked Christ himself questions; but usually in a way of temptation, as when they asked a Sign. And the Devil in the Serpent began this way of asking questions; *Hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?* And if any of them did at any time ask a question of Christ seriously, as he did, *Good master, what good thing must I do, that I may have eternal life?* Yet Christs answers never pleased them: it is said of that man, *that he went away sorrowful.* 1 Cor. 14. 11.
John 1. 19.
v. 24.
Marke 8. 11.
Gen. 3. 1.
Matt. 19.

Doct. And this shews us plainly, that whatever fair pretences natural men make of their believing in Christ, and loving him, and depending upon his propheticall office; yet they do it no further than suits with their own humour and interest. For when the word and will of Christ comes to pinch them, as they did this man, they say as those in *John*, *This is an hard saying, who can bear it?* No natural man doth, or can desire affectionately and sincerely to conform himself to the whole will of Christ. There goes so much self-denial to this, as no natural man in the world hath. Oh what fair shews many make of love, and obedience to Christ, and subjection to his word; and yet when any thing comes to the quick, and puts them upon self-decials, they flinch and go off from him. John 6. 60.

And asked what these things meant. From whence we may further observe.

Doct. That natural men, of the greatest parts and seeming

piety (such were the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*), are notwithstanding strangers to the transactions betwixt God and repenting sinners.

This Elder Son knew his Brother to be a Prodigal, but not a Convert; he knew his sins, but not his Grace: Such men know not by any experience, what a sinners conversion to God means, what his Reconciliation to God means; they are quite ignorant of the marvellous interview, and dear Embraces, that usually pass betwixt God and men in their Conversion. They have heard of him by the ear, but they cannot say as *Job*, that their eyes have seen him: They have no humble and holy converse with him, as this returning Prodigal had with his Father. The most refined and accomplished Moralists are strangers to the things of the Spirit of God in a sinners conversion, and reception into Grace and Favour with God by Jesus Christ: *A natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him.* They seem to be nonsense to him, as Regeneration did to *Nicodemus*; *Neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* The Mysteries of free Grace in Gods saving sinners, must be seen by another eye than any natural man hath; none see them, but they to whom the Spirit shews them: *He shall glorifie me, for he shall receive of mine, and shew it unto you.* Till *Nicodemus* was himself regenerated, he talked most absurdly of Regeneration: So did those Philosophers that would dispute with *Paul* about the Resurrection: And this is the reason that the best of natural men look so coyly on sinners, that pass through the work of Conversion: So did the *Jews* on *Paul* after his Conversion, they looked on him as a monster, not fit to live amongst men: So they did on *Isaiab* and his Converts, *Behold I and the children that thou hast given me, are for signs, and for wonders in Israel.* In *Israel*, those who were the people of God by profession.

Application. O therefore, bless God, bless him from your souls; if you have any experimental knowledg of those blessed transactions that pass betwixt God and poor sinners in their Conversion; and can bear witness, that these things are not notions and fancies, but reallities and great truths; if you can say as he did to the *Pharisees*, *One thing I know, that whereas*

1 Cor. 2. 14.

John 3.

John 16. 14.

Act 17.

Acts 22. 23.
Isa. 8. 18.

John 9. 25.

I was blind, now I see. O the power of Grace that makes such a sensible change in a sinners conversion ! And oh the sweet joy that God takes in a Convert, and he in God ! The Prodigal is a special instance of this ; the Father as soon as ever he came at him, fell on his neck and kissed him : And so was *Paul*, who spake such seraphical Language of his Conversion, as made *Fessus* think him besides himself. O blest and admire God for his Grace to you, and in you, for your experimental knowledge in these mysterious transactions, that pass betwixt God, and Christ, and sinners in their conversion ; such as are brought out of darkness into marvellous light. It is true, every sinners conversion is not with such observation and remark as of some. There was great difference herein betwixt *Paul* and the other Apostles. Christ called these with a still voice ; he did but say, *Follow me*, and the work was done. But *Pauls* Conversion was with thunder and lightning. v. 7, 10. Acts 26. 24. 1 Pet. 2. 9. Acts 9. 3.

But in all Converts, the change that is wrought both in respect of the state they leave, and that into which they are brought, is very wonderful to themselves, and for the most part begets in them a wondrous peace and joy, *Peace which passeth all understanding*, and joy which strangers intermeddle not with. So much for this Verse.

C H A P. XXXI.

Sheweth, That Gods Gospel-Dispensations are full of Reason. From the 27th Verse.

And he said unto him, Thy brother is come, and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.

HERE the Servant tells the Elder Son the reason of the Muck and Dancing, the great joy which he heard ; and it was, because of the safe return of his younger Brother. From whence observe,

D. St. That there is good reason there should be great rejoicing at a sinners conversion; And so saith the Father also to his Elder Son, *v. 22. It was meet that we should make merry and be glad.* Joy in Heaven, and joy in the preience of the Angels of God, is upon this account a very agreeable thing. But of this, having already spoken of in Chap. 23. I shall here add this further Consideration,

That tho Gods Gospel-Dispensations are a great Mystery; yet they are also full of Reason; they are extreme reasonable; as the Apostle calls the Saints offering their bodies as a living Sacrifice to God, *their reasonable service.* And that they are so, is manifest in the conspiring and agreement of the Divine Attributes herein: As his Will, *He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy.* And his Will is full of Reason: *Voluntas Dei, est ratio rationum;* his Will is his Reason, and the highest reason; and therefore he is said by Saint Paul, *To work all things after the counsel of his own will.* And so his will is the rule of his actions; they still run *according to the good pleasure of his will.* And his will is the rule of Christs actions, *I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.* And it is the rule that the rational creature is to act by, both Angels and men, *I come to do thy will, O God.*

And as the Will of God is notified in all his Gospel-Dispensations; so is his Wisdom, not only inferrible from his Will, but expressly declared. Therefore Jesus Christ is called *Wisdom.* Prov. 8. 5. And the Gospel of Christ and his Grace is called the *Wisdom of God.* It was impossible that it should have been contrived by any Wisdom beneath the Wisdom of God. Angels could not have devised it; it is a mystery to them as well as to us.

And it is the product of Gods Power; and is therefore called the *power of God.* The pardoning of sin, requires the Power of God; *Let the power of my Lord be great, in pardoning the iniquity of this people.* And where as it is said, *That the son of man hath power on earth to forgive sin,* We know that he is also God. And the Justice of God, doth also bear its part in his Gospel Dispensations: *If we confess our sins, he is faithful, and just to forgive us our sins.* There is Justice in the Salvation of some sinners, as in the Damnation of others: that is, justice as

to

1 Tim. 3. 16.

Rom. 12. 1.

Rom. 9. 18.

Eph. 1. 11.

Eph. 2. 3, 1.

Joh. 6. 38.

Psal. 103. 20.

Psal. 40. 8.

1 Cor. 1. 24.

1 Pet. 1. 12.

1 Cor. 1. 24.

Numb. 14. 17.

matth. 9. 6.

John 1. 9.

to Christ, the free Grace as to us : *Henceforth is laid up for me* 2 Tim. 4. a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me.

Hence let us apprehend good reason for our rejoicing at the conversion of any sinner. Let us learn, not think it strange, that the greatest sinner should obtain Mercy and Grace : *Paul* did, tho a Persecutor and a Blasphemer. We may not think that such a nonsuch for wickednesses, as *Manasseh* was ; or such a cruel Persecutor as *Paul* was, who was mad in Persecuting the Church, that such a sinner is past mercy. *I obtained mercy* saith *Paul*. God will have mercy on whom he will have mercy. All the sons of God shouted for joy at the first Creation ; and all Saints should do the like at Gods making a new Creature. The first Creation was finished in six days ; but the making of the new Creature will be a work that will last to the end of the world. 1 Tim. 1. 13. Rom. 9. 18. Job 38. 7.

Secondly, We may here also see, that there is reason for us to grieve at sinners, who refuse the offers of the Grace and Mercy of the Gospel ; who neglect so great salvation, and reject eternal life. The wilfulness of sinners against the gracious offers of Christ, was a great grief to him. *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thee, and thou wouldst not* : They were words from his heart. And so *Luke* 19. 41. *And when he came nigh to the city, he wept over it, &c.* Heb. 2. 2. Acts 13. 46. Matt. 23. 37.

Thirdly, Learn from hence, Never to let any of Gods Dispensations under the Gospel, to be an offence to you. We see there is reason, the highest reason in all. Let us neither be offended at the persons converted, tho they have been such sad persecutors and blasphemers, as *Paul* was ; nor at the time of their conversion, tho it be but a little before their death, as that malefactor was, *Luke* 23. Nor at Gods leaving sin to dwell in us after our conversion, when we are in a state of Grace, to make such lamentable work as it doth. Nor at the fore temptations and detortions of Saints, and eminent Servants of God, as *Pauls* thorn in the flesh. Nor at the long and hard sufferings of the Church of God by the World. We should not be offended at any of Gods Dispensations under the Gospel : for as there is great mystery, so there is great reason in all. There is no absurdity in any of them ; but there is a τὸ πρῶτον, a decency and agreeableness in them all. It is true, this

Pfal. 45.
2 Thef. 3. 2.

John 16. 18.
v. 29.

this may lie under cover, and as it were, within the vail for a time, as the Kings Daughter did : but it will at last break out from under the Clouds, as the Sun. There are many absurd men ; but there can be no absurdity in any thing that God doth to sinners, or Saints. The Disciples were puzzled at first with Christs saying, *We cannot tell what he saith* : but anon, they say, *now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb* ? And so shall we be able to do in the darkeſt diſpenſations, if we wait on God in the way of our duty. After a while, the vail ſhall be taken off, and we ſhall ſee as with open face, not only the myſtery, but the reaſon, and the ſymmetry of them all.

CHAP. XX XII.

Which ſheweth, that meer Moralliſts, do commonly both envy the Grace of God to others, and reſuſe it themſelves. From the firſt part of the 28. Verſe.

And he was angry, and would not go in.

HERE is the ſpirit of a *Scribe*, or *Phariſee*; that is, a *Hypocrite* : this is the temper of a meer outwardly Righteous and Religious man.

1. He diſtaſtes and envies his Brothers obtaining the favour and entertainment which himſelf had not.

2. He reſuſeth and rejects the ſame, when offered to himſelf. So that here are two points to be ſpoken to.

Doct. Firſt, That ſeemingly Righteous and Religious Men, diſtaſte and envy Gods receiving of greater ſinners than themſelves, unto Grace and Mercy. *And he was angry.* At what ? at his Fathers receiving his Prodigal Brother, ſo great a ſinner, with ſuch great joy. As it is ſaid of that Cedar repreſenting the Syrian Monarch, which God had made ſo great ; *That all the trees in the garden of God envied him* : ſo is a ſinner when he comes to himſelf, and returns to God ; he now becomes the envy of meer Moral and ſeemingly Religious Men : that one who

Ezec. 31. 9.

who had been a noted sinner, should be more in favour with God than themselves. When the *Pharisees* saw *Jesus* use a gracious affableness towards *Publicans* and *Sinners* that followed him, they were vexed at it. And therefore they could not forbear to ask his Disciples, why their Master was so familiar with *Publicans* and *Sinners*? why more than with them? but Christ replied upon them, for his Disciples, *The whole need not a physician, but those that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance:* sensible sinners. These *Publicans* and *Sinners* were sensible of their lost condition, and they fly to Christ as their Sanctuary, and City of Refuge. Matt. 9. 11, 12

Thus also we find, when the *Jews* saw *Paul* and *Barnabas* offer the word of Grace to the *Gentiles*, and the *Gentiles* eagerly thronging after them: it is said. *They were filled with envy, contradicting, and blaspheming, and stirred up devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city to persecute them* Observe how envious the devout *Jews* were against the *Gentiles*, their being partakers of the Grace of God. They looked upon them as great Sinners, and wonderfully below them, and so they thought of all that were below them in morality, and ceremonies; and therefore did not spare to call Christ himself a Sinner. *We know this man is a sinner*, and a Glutton, and Wine-bibber, a friend to *Publicans* and *Sinners*. Acts. 13. 45.
John 9. 24.
Matth. 11. 19.

Those amongst the *Jews* that were strict, and that built upon their own righteousness, they were so rigid to others whom they thought greater Sinners than themselves, that they measured Gods Mercy towards them by the *Sinai*al Covenant, as they called it, the Covenant he made at Mount *Sinai*; and conceived, that this pardoned only little sins, and left no place of Repentance and Pardon for great Sinners; as some Felons, according to our Law, are not allowed their Clergy.

But then, how came *David* to be pardoned his great sins? They find out shifts to excuse *David* from the guilt both of Adultery and Murder. From Adultery, because *Bathsheba's* Husband was in War; and from Murder, because *David* being a King, had a power over *Uriah's* Life. But if so, why then did the Lord so severely punish *David* for both, as we see he did? All those threatnings against him and his house, for those sins were executed. For the threatnings God de-

nounceth against Sinners, are not as Almanacks, that say on such days will be Rain, and on such days Frost and Snow, and commonly it is not so; but like sad and more fatal Comets: *Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and no one of these have failed*: That is, these Judgments that were threatened.

Isa. 34. 16.

It was the malignant Spirit of the Scribes and Pharisees, that they would not have great Sinners, as they called them, to have any Indulgence or Mercy from God. Beza speaks of some persons that used to twit him with the sins of his unregenerate state: *Invident mihi gratiam Divinam*: They envy me the Grace of God.

Neither is this malignancy only against the Persons receiving the Grace of God; but also against the Grace of God it self. And that because this Grace is an enemy to self Righteousness, and self Opinion, Rom. 11. 6. *If by grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace.* The Grace of the Gospel hath found enemies in all ages since the preaching of it to the World. At first, The Pelagians, after the Semipelagian, Socinians, Arminians, and Papists; and indeed Moral men, and all meer Moralists have had, and have a great prejudice against free Grace, the Grace of God by Christ Jesus, because it puts them upon self-denial; upon denying their own righteousness as well as their sins, which they cannot bear. There is a Jewish Spirit in these men: *Who going about to establish their own righteousness*, do not, neither can submit themselves to the righteousness of God.

Rom. 10. 3.

The Grace of God hides pride from man; the doing of this, is one of Gods great designs in the Gospel, and it excludes boasting, and is an enemy to heart-lusts, as well as the Law. *I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.* The Grace of the Gospel casts down imaginations, or sinful reasonings, and it brings into captivity every thought, every proud and sinful thought. The Grace of God allows not men to entertain a thought in their heart, that will not bear the eye of Christ. And this the strictest Moralist, who is no more, cannot bear. These, tho severe outwardly, yet will have liberty to be loose within; *they make clean the outside, but within is rottenness.* These men like the Doctrine of Rome very well, *Concupiscentia in Renatis, non est peccatum.* Concupiscence

Rom. 3. 27.

Rom. 7. 7.

John 2. 25.

Marth. 23.

piscence in the Regenerate is no Sin: according to that common, but foolish and wicked saying, Thoughts are free.

But the Government of Gospel-Grace is exercised as much within doors, as without. As Christ said to the Jews in another case, *The kingdom of God is within you.* And as the Apostle saith, *He is a Jew that is one inwardly.* Luke 17. 21. Rom. 2. 28.

Again, These kind of men are offended at Gods manner of dispensing his Grace; they fret and chafe at God himself, as well as his Grace, as those Labourers did at the Hushandman. *These have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal to us that have borne the heat of the day.* Who is this they quarrel with? The good man of the house, who in this Parable is Gods Representative. The nature of man since the fall, is impudent, and quarrellsome with God himself, even so far, as to charge him: *The woman which thou gavest me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.* His heart fretteth against many of Gods dispensations of Grace. When God saith, *I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy:* The carnal man saith, *Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will?* As sore Eyes cannot bear the light of the Sun, so unsound hearts cannot bear the manner of Gods dispensing his Grace, they cannot bear his freedom herein. Man likes not of many things that God doth. As *Alfonso* King of *Spain*, had the confidence to say, That if he had been at the Creation, he would have ordered some things better.

The Preacher saith, *Eccl. 7. 14.* That God doth so dispose of things, *that man should find nothing after him.* Man cannot mend what God makes; and yet these men in the pride of their hearts, and self-conceit, imagine that they can order the work of Salvation, and the pardon of sin, better than God hath done.

Use. Oh take heed of this Spirit, which, notwithstanding the seeming Devotion and strictness of such men, is damnable. The Holy Ghost makes this the property of wicked men, that they are grieved and gnash their Teeth at the godly, when God doth them any honour; as *Haman* did at *Mordecai.* For men to complain of Gods way of dispensing his Grace, is by interpretation, to make themselves juster and wiser than God. The Woman thought to be as wise as God, but she learned this proud thought from the Devil, and so do all men

that have it. Such men would have their own will to think and talk, and do as they list; and yet will not let God have his, nor do what he will with his own. But a man that hath true Grace, an humble man, he will think it reason enough, that it is Gods pleasure to do what he doth, as to pass by the more likely, and chuse the more unlikely. This was enough to Jesus Christ himself, who, as man, was a Person of the highest reason, yet was so far from being offended at God in this case, that he gave him thanks for it: *I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.* If Princes have their *Arcana Imperii*; how much more should we adore those of the Great God, who as he cannot lye, Heb. 6. so he cannot be unjust; or oppress, nor be called to an account, Job 33. *He giveth not account of any of his matters.* He hath hid the Mysteries of the Gospel from many Ages and Generations; and in these latter days hath revealed them to his Saints; and who may say, what dost thou? It is surely best and safest for these men to turn their envious and angry piques at Gods methods, into reverend Admirations, as Paul did at his casting off the Jews, and receiving in the Gentiles to the Grace of the Gospel: *O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!*

And to move you further to it, Consider, First, That this kind of Envy is natural to man: *The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy.* The ten Disciples envied the two, about pre-eminence in Christs Kingdom. For this sin, the Apostles in most of their Epistles rebuked many of the Christians to whom they wrote. Now that sin that is so natural to all men, that which every man may call *his iniquity, and the sin that doth so easily beset him*, we should labour the more to mortifie. It will hold you hard to it, as some of the Canaanites did Israel; but the more you dislike it, and resist it, the weaker you will find it.

Secondly, Envy is a strange sin, tho it be natural. It is the depression or casting down of a mans Soul, at the exaltation of another, which at all times, is base; but here so much the more, in regard that what is done, is Gods act. He gives five Talents

Talents to one, and but two to another, and but one to another. Remember what God saith in this case: *Is thine eye evil, because I am good?* Matth. 20. 15. Envy is a disease caught at anothers health; a strange way of Infection!

3. Angels do not envy the Preheminence of our nature above theirs, *Heb. 2. 16.* Their nature is without envy; they glorifie God for our Reconciliation to him by Christ, in our nature, not theirs, *Luke 2. 14.* There is no envy in Heaven. So free is the Angelical Nature from envy at us, that they are affected at the advancement of our Nature by Christ; they love us the better for this, and are great friends to those that *Heb. 1. 16.* are in Christ.

O, labour for this Angelical Disposition, to be well pleased with the Grace of God; how and wheresoever it pleaseth him to dispencc it. So were the believing Jews with the Grace of God to the Gentiles, *They glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life?* How did Paul Glory in the Faith and Obedience of the Romans? And in the Love, and Patience, and Hope, of the *Thessalonians?* And in the Charity of the *Macedonians?* *Rom. 1. 8. 16.* *1 Thes. 1. 3.* *2 Cor. 8. 2.*

Such a disposition as this, is a great blessing amongst those *Spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.* We have the advantage of other mens grace, as well as our own: take away envy, and what is mine, that is not thine? and what is thine, that is not mine? But the man that is envious at the Grace of God to others, stands full in his own light: he cannot enjoy *Jouah 2.* *his own mercy:* muchless the benefits which would otherwise accrue to him from the Grace of God in others. *Eph. 2. 3.*

Joseph knew why he made *Benjamins* Mefs five times as much as his Brethrens, tho his Brethren knew it not, till afterwards. Christ said to *Peter*, *What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.* Consider, God hath never the less Grace for thee, when he gives never so much to the greatest of sinners, such as this Prodigal was. As the Sun gives not the less light to thee, tho it gives light to the whole world. A Gospel-Spirit is constituted of Self-denying, and God-admiring and praising thoughts, with respect to his freedom in dispensing his Grace to the World. This was Christs own Spirit. *I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid th se things from the wise and prudent,* *Matt. 11. 25.*

prudent, and hath revealed them unto babes ; even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.

So much for the first clause of the 28th Verse, *And he was angry.* It follows, *and would not go in.* That is, to the joyful entertainment of his Brother. Whence we may observe,

2. *Dott.* That many of the strictest Moralists and seemingly Religious Men, refuse the Grace and Mercy of the Gospel when offered to them.

Such were, and so did the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*. Christ was to come of the *Jews*, and the *Jews* were first invited to him, and Mercy and Grace by him: *It was meet*, said Paul and Barnabas, *that the word of God should first have been spoken to you.* God had a peculiar favour for that People. But they put it from them, they would have none of the Grace of God offered to them; and therefore, themselves being Judges, were unworthy of eternal life. *Publicans* followed Jesus, but *Pharisees* would not, they would not come in: *verily I say unto you, that the Publicans and Harlots go into the kingdom of heaven before you.* It was they that were bidden to the feast, but refused to come. They were as backward to accept of the Grace of the Gospel, as Israel was to go into Canaan; *He came to his own, and his own received him not.* *I would have gathered you, and ye would not.* *Ye will not come to me, that ye may have life.* Christ wooed them all the time of his Ministry; but they rejected his offers of Grace: *All the day long have I stretched forth my hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people.* When the repenting *Publicans* glorified God, and were thankful for *Johns* Ministry which pointed them to Salvation by Jesus Christ (*And all the people that heard him, and the Publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John*) It is said, *that the Pharisees and Lawyers rejected the counsel of God.* But it was their ruin. Nay Christ tells us, they would neither go themselves into the kingdom of heaven, nor suffer those that were entering, to go in. And therefore decreed, that whosoever should confess Jesus to be the Christ, should be put out of the Synagogue.

Scribes and *Pharisees* will not own such a Christ, as *Publicans* and *Sinners* do; nor own such Gospel Grace, nor go to such a Heaven

The *Jews* would not joyn with the *Gentiles* in receiving the Gospel.

Gospel. *Simon the Pharisee marvelled and muttered, that Jesus would have any thing to do with such a Woman as Mary Magdalen: If this man were a Prophet, he would have known what manner of woman this is, that toucheth him; for she is a sinner.* Luc. 7. 39.

Now the Reasons why such men refuse the Grace of the Gospel, are these.

Reas. 1. Because they were and are too proud to believe in so mean a Saviour as Christ seemed to be in his first appearance to the world. *Is not this the carpenters son? And is not this the Carpenter?* They looked for Christ, but it was for one with worldly Pomp and Grandure, and so Christs state of humiliation was a stumbling-stone to them, wherein was fulfilled that prophesy, *He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him: he is despised and rejected of men.* They would not venture their Salvation upon such a mean Christ as he appeared to be. Mar. 6. 3. Matt. 13. 55. Isa. 53. 2, 3.

2. The Grace of the Gospel doth not suit with the proper genius of such men. Men of parts, and morality, and some kind of Religion too, cannot count those things loss, which the Grace of the Gospel will have them do. These men perceive that if they receive this Grace, they must quite change their opinion of themselves, and other things; which they cannot hear of. Grace makes men new Creatures; and so makes them opposite to their former selves; as Paul was to Saul. Such men take their Gifts, and their morality, their will worship, to be Grace. And therefore that which will makethem to cast away all these in their justification before God, they cannot receive and relish. 2 Cor. 5. 17.

It is not an easy thing for such men to think there is nothing of price and value in all they do for obtaining of Eternal Life. Much harder is it to bring them to look upon their own goodness, and Righteousness, as hindrances from the Grace of Christ and Heaven. But it is so; for when Paul had grace, he saw that his Gifts and Priviledges, and legal Righteousness, which he once admired, had been his hinderance from Christ and Heaven, and therefore counted *all things loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ.* Matt. 19. Phil. 3. 8.

Because these men live civilly, and deal justly, they think themselves Saints; and now for them to receive the Grace of God

Numb. 6. 12. God? this will obscure all these things (as the appearance of the Sun doth the Stars) and make them to undo all they had already done for Heaven; as the *Nazarite* was to lose the days of his separation that were denied. Such Grace as out of a man of himself, of his good Works, as well as his evil; his Righteousness, as well as his sins; that makes him cast away all his former good esteem of himself, and of his estate towards God; they are unperfwadable to this; to this, without the special transforming influence of the Divine Spirit, they neither can nor will stoop.

Application. First, This informs us how hard and rare it is for men that are but externally Righteous and Religious, to be converted and saved. They were such men, many of them, that our blessed Saviour spake so strangely of; *Their hearts are waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and should be converted, and I should heal them.* They saw Christs Miracles, yet they closed their Eyes lest they should see; and they heard Christs Ministry, and yet stopt their Ears, lest they should hear.

Mark 10. 23. As Christ said of rich men, how hardly should they that have Riches enter into the Kingdom of God? So may it be said, how hard is it for a man that trusteth in his Righteousness, to be Converted and Saved? His Righteousness makes him so self-confident, that it keeps him off from the use of Christ. A prophane person is nearer Conversion than a civil or moral man. Not that Prophaneness is nearer Grace than Morality; but because a prophane man is sooner and more easily self-condemned than the other. The other hath something of his own, which he thinks he may trust to: The *Publicans* and *Harlots*, saith our Saviour to the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, *go into the kingdom of God before you.* Hypocrites, of all men, are most seldom Converted. That Scripture is fulfilled in them, *He feedeth on ashes; a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lye in my right hand?*

Matt. 23. God doth in Judgment give him up to believe a lye. I say not, that it is impossible that a self-conceited *Pharisee* should be converted; as Christ said, *all things are possible with God.* Paul was a *Pharisee*, and thought himself blameless as to the Righteousness of the Law, and yet he was converted. And so it appears

appears was *Nicodemus*, who was of the *Pharisees*; he brings a mixture of *myrrh* and *aloes*, about an hundred pound weight, in honour to Christ at his Burial: But I say, it is a hard and rare thing for a Hypocrite, or one that trusts in his own righteousness, to be converted; he swells too much in his own conceit, to enter in at the strait gate. God is put to it in dealing with such men; O *Ephraim*, what shall I do unto thee? O *Judah*, what shall I do unto thee? John 3. 1.
Luke 13. 24.
Hos. 6. 4.

Secondly, This shews us the reason, why our blessed Saviour was more tart and severe in his language and dealing with the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, than with *Publicans* and *Sinners*; as with that praying *Publican*, that smote on his breast, and with that weeping sinner, *Luke 7.* He dealt gently with these, as with *bruised reeds*, & a *smoking flax*. But when he came to speak to *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, he calls them hypocrites almost at every word, and begins almost every sentence with *wo, Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites.* What was the reason of this? But because they were such self-confidants, that they slighted him, and his righteousness, and his offers of Grace and Mercy, which other poor souls prized, and valued, and sought after: they thrust Christ out of his Office, and denied his Authority. Luc. 18. 13.
Matth. 23.

Thirdly, This informs us, That men that have only a form of Godliness, and a name to live, as most of the Church of *Sardis* had; they are men of the greatest perverseness; men of crooked spirits, like knotty wood, that cannot be wrought on to bring it into the building; *They are a perverse and crooked generation.* This was spoken of *Israel*. The perversest spirits against the Grace of the Gospel may be in the Church; The Apostle *Peter* called the *Jews*, a *froward generation*. And these perverse spirits may be known by these two things. Rev. 3. 1.
Deut. 32. 5.
Ags 2. 40.
1. They wave the Scripture for their rule, and are stiff for the traditions of men; so were the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, a strict sect, as *Paul* calls them. 2. They pervert the meaning of Scripture, and make it speak for their own lusts; as *Philip* of *Macedon* did the *Heathen Oracles*, which were said to say, what *Philip* would have them. Jesus took notice of this in his Sermon on the Mount, wherein he opposeth not his answers against *Moses*, but against the corrupt glosses of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*. From this kind of men, you may see Matt. 5. 21.

your selves different by your high esteem of the Grace of the Gospel, by your experience of the power of it in your hearts, and the influence it hath on your lives and conversations.

C H A P. XXXIII.

Sheweth Gods gracious Condescension towards the greatest sinners. From the latter part of the 28th Verse.

Therefore came his father out, and entreated him.

WE have done with the Action between the Elder Son, and one of his Fathers Servants; he next continues it with his Father; and his Father begins, *Therefore came his father out, and entreated him.* Oh the condescension of God to froward, perverse men. *If he humbles himself in beholding things that are in heaven and in earth,* Psal. 113. 6. How then doth he humble himself, when he entreats sinners! Now the Doctrine from these Words is this,

Doct.

That God doth entreat stubborn, perverse, and proud sinners, to come in and accept of the Grace and Mercy of the Gospel, *As tho God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christs stead, be ye reconciled unto God.* See how this blessed message went a begging amongst sinners. Gods language when he made the world, was, *Let there be light.* And when he gave the Law, it was Commanding. But in the Gospel he is pleased to entreat. And God doth this,

2 Cor. 5. 20.

1. Because he is God, and not man, *I will not return to destroy Ephraim; froward and wilful Ephraim; for I am God, and not man.* It is a mighty encouragement that poor sinners have, that they have to do with God, who hath power to pardon what sinners he will *He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and be gracious to whom he will be gracious.* It is Gods power that he can pardon great sins; and it is his power that he can stoop so to sinners. No man, no creature could do this, hath so much

Hof. 11. 9.

Exod. 33. 19.

Numb 14. 17.

much power, and could have so much patience and condescension. *Who is a God like unto thee, who pardonest iniquities?* God shews his Godhead as much in his gracious transactions with sinners, as in any thing: A mother can entreat a froward and peevish child, but what man entreats an enemy to accept of his forgiveness? Or what Prince ever entreats a traitor, or a stubborn rebel to accept of a pardon? No, this is not the manner of *men*, as *David* said, he must be God that can do this. *2 Sam. 7. 19.* God may say to every sinner, I am God and not man, and therefore I entreat you to be reconciled to me, and to accept my grace and favour.

Reas. 2. Jesus Christ hath purchased this of his Father, That sinners may be thus graciously dealt with. *God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself:* Entreating sinners to be reconciled. The Justice of God would not let him be so forbearing, patient, and pitiful to sinners, and so importunate with them to be saved. All this is in Christs Ransom and Purchase for sinners. Why doth not God deal thus with the Angels that sinned, but because Christ purchased nothing for them? And as Christ hath purchased this Grace of his Father; so he prays his Father also; for when God saw reason sufficient to cast off the *Jews* before he did it, Christ interposed, and importun'd him to forbear them a while longer, *Lord, let it alone this year also.* *Luk. 13. 8.*

Reas. 3. God stoops thus to sinful man, that he may know the desperate wickedness that is in his heart.

That a sinner should not only stand it out against Gods commands and threatnings, but also against his entreatings and beseechings; this shews how desperately wicked the nature of man is.

Reason 4. God doth thus, that he may leave sinners without excuse. In the great and terrible day of the Lord, he will say to every condemned sinner, *Thou art inexcusable, O man.* For did not I lay my commands on thee to repent! But now God commands all men every where to repent. And did not I lay my commands upon thee, to believe in my Son? This is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his son Jesus Christ. And did I not expostulate and reason the case with thee, why thou wouldst not return to me, and be saved? Why wilt ye dye, O house of Israel? But more than this, did I. *Rom. 2. Acs 17. 30. 1 Joh. 3. 23. Eze. 33. 11.*

not entreat thee with the words of my own mouth, as *Jeh.* said to his Servants, did I not entreat thee in the bowels of mercy, to be reconciled to me, to quit thine enmity against me and my Holiness, and to accept of pardon offered thee a hundred, a thousand times? Such a sinner must needs be speechless as that man was, *Matth. 22. 12.* Sinners will then be *αὐτοκτάτες* self-condemned: They shall not then reply upon God, chat at God, as now they do; but all the condemned world will be found guilty before him.

Tir. 3. 11.

Rom. 9. 20.

Rom. 3. 19.

2 Chron. 6. 18

Phil. 8. 9.

Rev. 12. 11.

Application. 1. Let this put us upon admiration, that God, the great and holy God, should thus stoop to perverse and proud sinners: If *Solomon* wondred at Gods promise to his people to be present in the Temple, *But will God in very deed dwell with men on earth?* How much more may we say, But will God in very deed humble and abase himself so far, as to intreat sinners to accept of mercy? That God should say to a stubborn sinner, as *Paul* to *Philemon*, *Tho. I might enjoin thee, yet I rather beseech thee.* The Apostle *John* saith, *There appeared a great wonder in heaven.* Truly this is a great wonder that appears in Heaven to the holy Angels, That God should intreat and beseech sinners to be reconciled to him. Good will towards men was a thing that Angels did wonder at: Much more may they and we admire it, when it is manifested by so gracious an Embassy, that sinners are entreated to accept it. This is one of those Gospel mysteries, which the Angels desire to look into, *1 Pet. 1. 12.* Therefore, as *Mary* kept and pondered the sayings of the Angel in her heart, *Luke 2.* So let us keep and ponder this saying of Jesus Christ in ours, *Therefore came his father out and entreated him.* For we are apt to see as little wonder in Gods free grace, as the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* did in Christs greatest miracles.

Secondly. Let this Doctrine exhort us to mind Gods entreaties, as often as we consider his commands. Think with thyself, that as God commands thee, so he entreats thee too, not to indulge thy passion, pride, covetousness, discontent, distrust. That God entreats thee to mind Heaven more than earth; to look to thy heart in prayer; to take heed how thou hearst; to do, as well as hear. We have need of all this, and God sees we have need of all to work upon us, and all works but upon few.

Quest. But why doth God suffer men to refuse his calls, and his offers of Grace and Salvation?

Ans. To such a question as this, *Augustine* answered, *Doctiorem querat, qui hanc Questionem ei explicet.* Let him look one, that can satisfy his Curiosity, for I neither can nor will do it. Oh remember, when such questions as these are put into your thoughts, how many *Bethshemites* were destroyed for peeping into the Ark: If God will leave a negative voice in the power of men as to their Conversion, as it seems he doth, as *Jesus* said to *Peter*, *What is that to thee?* You may as well ask *God*, why he fixed not mans will, and all the will of Angels to their first estate? But this is replying against *God*, or disputing with him, which the Apostle blames, as a proud and insolent part in any man. Be satisfied with what is revealed. It is the Devils trick, to put you upon queries, and perplexing reasonings, to hinder you in your duty. What saith the Scripture? *Let God be true, and every man a liar.* *Are not my ways equal, and your ways unequal, saith the Lord?*

1 Sam. 6. 19.

Acts 7. 51.

Rom. 9. 20.

Rom 3. 4.

Ez. 18. 25.

Rom. 11. 33.

Phil. 2. 12, 13.

John 7. 17.

To distrust the Wisdom and Equity of *God*, tends much to Atheism. Therefore do not pore over-boldly into these secrets; but humbly adore them. When *Paul* had discoursed the case of Godscasting off the *Jews*, and taking in the *Gentiles*, he concludes thus: *O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God.* And know this of a truth, that *Gods Power* takes not away all Agency from man in his Conversion. It is the Eye that sees, tho the Sun gives the light. Man must work out his salvation, tho it be *God that giveth both to will and to do.* Obedience, saith *God* by the Prophet, *is better than sacrifice.* So obedience to the Will of *God*, is better than inquiring into the Reason of it. Do your duty, and that is your best way to be satisfied. *If any man do his will, saith Christ, he shall know of the Doctrine, whether it be of God.* *Hagar* and her Son were turned out of the house; but these men, who undertake to dispute with *God*, turn out themselves.

So much for the 28. Verse.

C H A P. XXXIV.

Wherein is shewed, That meer Moralists and Carnal Professors, are very confident of their good estate towards God. Together with those solid grounds upon which men may safely judg hereof. From the first part of the 29. Verse.

And he answering, said to his Father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment.

HERE we have part of the Elder Sons answer to his Father. And it is full stufft with arrogancy and self-conceit.

Now we are to remember, that the Father here personates God., and the Elder Son the Jews, especially the Scribes and Pharisees. And these represent that sort of men, who are self-confidents, and self-justiciaries; that think themselves righteous, and to need no repentance; the whole that need not the physician; that find fault with Gods Gospel-Dispensations, and despise others, that indeed are better than themselves. In a word, very hypocrites, having a form of godliness, but denying the power; resembling Saints without, but full of uncleanness within. So that the Doctrine we may hence learn, is this,

Doct. That men who are but externally righteous and religious, are very confident of their goodness, and good estate towards God. There are many clear instances in the case, besides this, before us. As those professors of Christ, who preached and wrought Miracles in his Name, of whom Christ himself spake, Matt. 7. 22. *Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and done many mighty works?*

They

They speak like men confident of themselves and of Heaven. So were the five foolish Virgins, because of their trimmed Lamps, their fair profession of Religion; they were confident their state was good: *Lord, Lord, open to us.* So that young man was confident he had kept all the commands of God that Christ named, from his youth: *All these have I kept from my youth up.* And those Jews, in John 8. after all Christs reasoning with them, yet would hold their confidence that Abraham was their Father, and that they were the Children of God. The wise man saith, *There is a generation pure in their own eyes, that are not washed from their filthiness.* So we find Ephraim holding forth his confidence of his good estate. *In all my labour, they shall find none iniquity in me: Ephraim* challenged even the Prophet to say, black is his eye: No, saith he, I have a better Conscience than so; when, alas, poor Ephraim was a cake not turned; neither hot nor cold; hal-*ving betwixt two*; a very mongrel. He had gray hairs, and *knew it not.*

Matth. 25.

Verse 11.

Matth. 19. 20.

Verse 34. 44.

Prov. 30. 12.

Hof. 12. 8.

Hof 7. 8.

Rev. 3.

1 Kings 18.

Hof. 7. 9.

This man in the text saith more of himself, than ever any man could say, but Jesus Christ: *Neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment*: Jesus indeed could say so, *I do always the things that please my father.* But who else could ever say so? yet this man dares do it; so confident was he of his own goodness, and of his good estate towards God. And this self-confidence is common with such men, in every Generation. Such men now have as good a conceit of themselves, as they had then. It is an experienced thing, Self-confidence and self flattery, follows the nature of man: *Thou art confident that thou thy self art a guide of the blind.* The Jew looked upon the Gentile, as a poor blind Creature, and on himself as the Light of the World; as Christ called his Apostles. Yea, tho such men are as full of sores within, as Job or Lazarus was without, yet they think themselves as fair as Absalom, without blemish from head to foot.

John 8. 29.

Rom. 2. 19.

Matth. 5. 14.

2 Sam. 14. 25.

And what is the reason of this?

Reas. 1. First, their Ignorance of the spiritualness of the Law of God. It was the opinion of the Jews that sought righteousness by the Law, especially the Pharisees, That the Law commanded and forbad only external acts; as that nothing but killing

Matt. 5. 21, 22. killing was murder. Whereas our Saviour saith, that unadvised anger, is an approach to Murder, and that hatred is murder: *Whosoever hateth his brother, is a murderer.* But the Jews looked only at the Letter, and knew nothing of the spiritual part of the command. Nor do natural men now; and this was, and is the reason of their self-confidence. It was so with Paul, whilst a Pharisee: *Concerning the righteousness of the law, I was blameless:* He compared himself only with the outside of the Law; his own outside, and the outside of the Law together; he neither looked within the Law, nor within himself. Therefore saith he, *I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died:* Without the spiritual part of the Law, I had no sense of Sin, nor trouble of Conscience; but when I came to feel the Law within, judging and condemning, not only evil Acts, but evil Concupiscence; then I saw I was a sinful wretch, and dead in Law. So that mens ignorance of the spiritualness of the Law, is a great reason of their good thoughts of themselves, and that that keeps them from the sense of sin, and trouble of Conscience, and so all is well with them: *I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing.*

Rev. 3. 17.

Secondly, These men infer their good estate from their morality, and fair carriage in the World, and negative goodness; they are *not as other men*, Adulterers, Drunkards, Unjust, and the like; and they have a cask of Religion, a form of Godliness. But as for their morality, self-interest alone, without any regard to God, will teach this to every man. And as for a form of godliness, there may be this, where there is not the Power. A man may Preach and Pray, and be seemingly Godly, and yet have no saving Grace; It was so with Judas; there was so little appearing difference betwixt him and the other Disciples, that they were more jealous of themselves, than of him; therefore they say, *Master*

Matth. 26. 22. *is it I.*

Thirdly, Another great reason of such mens good thoughts of themselves and their condition, is a Spirit of delusion that possesseth them: *They have a lye in their right hand*, a very phantasm or figment, and know it not: As the Prophet speaketh of Idolaters.

Isa. 44. 20.

For 1. Satan blinds their minds ; he makes them to think 2 Cor. 4. 4.
they are in *Dothan*, when they are in *Samaria*. Satan de- 2 Kings 6.
ceives them, as he did *Eve*. He can transform himself into an 2 Cor. 11. 3.
Angel of Light. As there is *Deceptio visus*, as when the Magi-
cians seemed to turn their Rods into Serpents, which were
but meer phantasms ; a craft taught them by the Devil ; so
there is *Deceptio mentis*, a cheating of the mind and conscience
in spiritual things, and in a mans spiritual condition. How con-
fident did the lying spirit make *Zedekiah*, that the counsel he
gave *Abab*, was from the Lord ? 1 Kings 22.

2. As they are deceived by Satan, so they deceive themselves;
they play the sophisters with themselves, they have false dis-
course with their own consciences. Such had *Saul* when he
gloried to *Samuel* of his obedience : *Blessed be thou of the Lord:* 1 Sam. 15.
I have performed the commandment of the Lord. And when *Sam-* v. 20.
uel gave a check to his confidence, he reasserts it ; yea, *I have* Gen. 3.
obeyed the voice of the Lord.

At first Satan used the Serpent to deceive man ; and now he
useth the hearts of men to deceive themselves. And therefore
the Scripture saith, *the heart is deceitful above all things.* Hence Jer. 17. 9.
it is, that *every way of a man is right in his own eyes*, and that Pro. 21. 2.
all the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes. Rotten wood Pro. 16. 2.
will shine in the dark : and all natural men are in the dark
as to spiritual things : *The natural man receiveth not the things* 1 Cor. 2. 14.
of the spirit, neither can he know them, because they are spiritual-
ly discerned. So deceitful is the heart, that it deceives them
as to God, and what he is, as well as what themselves are : *thou*
thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thy self. They Psal. 50. 21.
transform God into an Idol, after their own phancy.

3. As Satan beguiles them, and their own hearts deceive them:
so God in his Righteous Judgment, sends them strong delusions, 2 Thes. 2. 11.
that they should believe a lye ; as he sent forth a lying spirit in- 1 Kings 22.
to the mouth of all *Ababs* Prophets.

And there are many sins, that provoke God to do this ; as
contempt of the Gospel : *Because they received not the love of*
the truth that they might be saved. For this cause God shall send 2 Thes. 2. 10, 11.
them strong delusions to believe a lye. And so pride and self-
conceit : for as God guideth the humble and the meek in judg- Psal. 25. 9.
ment, and teacheth such in his way ; so he beholds the proud and
self-conceited afar off : As the Jews did a *Leper*. Numb. 12.

And when God puts a man out of his presence, then he wanders as *Cain* did; and the Devil meets with him, and is a lying spirit in his heart, as he was in *Zedekiah's* mouth, and as he was to *Eve*.

Application. This informs us of many things.

1. Here we see the different spirit of men that are sincerely godly, and those that are but seemingly so: The holiest men are yet apt to be jealous and fearful of themselves; they are full of sincerity, and yet not always without doubts; and therefore commune much with their own hearts; whereas men that have some seeming holiness without, but not true holiness within, are full of confidence and self-conceit, and take all their hearts say of them upon trust; have little trouble of conscience all their life, nor any bands in their death.

Psal 73 4

Jer. 9. 6.

Eph. 1. 27.

Ez. 28. 3.

Matth. 9.

Rev. 3.

2. This shews us under what great deceit this kind of men continually live, *They hold fast deceit*, as the Prophet speaks. They have a deceiver and supplanter within themselves, their own deceived and deceiving hearts. Their heart is like a flattering glass, makes them look fair, and in their own eyes already, what Christ will make his own people, when he shall present them to his Father, *without spot or wrinkle*. The meer moral man looks upon himself to have more Grace, than he doth that hath grace indeed; he sees no cause to complain, *Mine iniquities are a burden too heavy for me*, as *David* did. Nor to cry out, *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?* as *Paul* did. So that the Lord may say to such a man as he did ironically to the Prince of *Tyrus*, *Behold, thou art wiser than Daniel*. So, behold thou art holier than *David*, and holier than *Paul*; thou thinkst thyself so. Oh what a grand cheat is such a man to himself, *He is whole, and needs not the Physician*: As Christ said of the *Scribes and Pharisees*. He feels not the need of Christ, as a gracious soul doth; *I am rich, and have need of nothing*.

3. This may inform us of the very sad estate of these men, who are so highly conceited of the goodness of it. For, 1. They are much, if not altogether hindered from that sense of sin and guilt, and the corruption of human nature, which is necessary to conversion, and useful afterwards; and this is a very dangerous condition. 2. It hinders their desires of Grace, and so

is a double bar of their Conversion; it is hard to bring good natures to think there is any other grace. This is the plague of many mens hearts; when they have a comparative righteousness to brag of, as that *Pharisee*, Luke 18. *God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are:* There are thousands worse than I: I am no Drunkard, Adulterer, nor Extortioner; Oh, this swells them up; when they can say, we do this and that; as that *Pharisee*, *I fast twice a week, and pay tithes of all that I possess.* Now they bless themselves as *Saul* did, *I have done the commandment of the Lord;* when he had left the greatest part undone. Those Diseases are most dangerous that men are most insensible of; so self-Righteousness is as dangerous a disease as prophaness; yea, more dangerous, because it is not felt as a disease: If comparative righteousness would save a man, there would scarce any man be damned; for where almost can you find the man, but can say, *I thank God I am not as some other men are?*

Secondly, This Doctrine is of use to Exhortation. O take heed of ungrounded confidence of your good estate: For a man to deceive himself, is the greatest folly: As no man can be flattered by another, till he first flatter himself; so no man can be deceived by another, till he be willing to deceive himself: and this self-deceit springs from inordinate self-love, a great sin of the last days. *Know this, that in the last days* ^{2 Tim. 3.} *men shall be lovers of themselves, and boasters, and proud fellows:* Men that are unduly in love with themselves, soon grow proud and self-conceited of themselves and their condition: Self-love breeds self-flattery, and these are glasses that make a man seem double to himself, to what he really is: Against this dangerous disease the Apostle cautions us, *Let no man think of himself more highly than he ought;* but humbly and with abasing thoughts; as *Paul* did when he thought himself *less than the least of all Saints.* When a man thinks himself to be something, he is nothing, as it was with the Angel of the Church of *Laodicea*, *Thou sayest I am rich, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art poor, and miserable, and wretched, and blind, and naked.* ^{Rom. 12. 3.} ^{Eph. 3. 8.} ^{Rev. 3. 17.}

Quest. But will you make nothing of good nature? Nothing of parts and accomplishments? Nothing of moral righteousness? nothing of a Profession of Religion?

Mar. 10. 21.

Ans. I answer, they are all nothing, as to the evidencing of a saving state, which must be something of a higher nature than all this; in their kind and compass they are lovely things, even in Christs eyes; but yet there is one thing lacking to make a saving state. If you say colours are worth nothing without light, you do not disparage them in their own kind; and so if I say all these are not sufficient without Grace to a mans salvation; I do not undervalue them, and say they are nothing at all. Brass is good and useful, but it is not currant coin; so good nature and morality, and a profession of Religion, are good, and lovely, and necessary, but they are not sufficient to state a man, a godly man; Godliness is something above all these.

1 Cor. 3. 12.

Therefore rest not on these things alone, take heed of self-confidence: Tho you are quiet at present, yet whenever conscience comes to be awakened whilst you live, or when you come to die, or to judgment, you will find your silver is but dross; and that *is be all loss, which you courted gain*; as Paul said upon his conversion. It is said of Witches, that the Devil makes them believe he gives them Silver and Gold; but when they come to use it, it is but sticks and straws: So all your confidence in your own goodness and righteousness, when it comes to the trying point, to trouble of conscience, to death, or to Judgment, you will find all to be but *wood, hay, and stubble*. Oh then, take care you cherish no other confidence, but what will abide the day of the Lord, wherewith *you may have boldness in the day of judgment*.

1 John 4. 17.

Eph. 3; 12.

A&. 15 28.

I intend not the disturbance of any mans well-grounded hopes and confidence, for such there is, a confidence that comes in by Christ; it is obtained by his merit, and is wrought by his spirit. I would make void all self-deceit, and self-delusions, and the cheats of *Satan*, who as he transforms himself into an Angel of light, so helps many men to transform themselves into Saints, who are nothing less. I would neither leave you at uncertainties, nor would I puzzle you with things unnecessary; *I would not lay any greater burden upon you, than the Holy Ghost doth*; As the Apostles said: If I should press such things upon you, as some did upon the Brethren, who told them, *That unless they were circumcised after the manner of Moses, they could not be saved*: So if I should tell you, *That except you*

be of such or such a perswasion, or have such and such Degrees of Grace, ye cannot be saved; I should then bind heavy burdens on you, and grievous to be born, as the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* did on their hearers. I shall therefore only tell you, Matth. 23. 4. what is necessary to enable you safely to conclude, you are in a saving state. Which you may do by these following particulars.

First, By a Spirit of godly fear and jealousy over your selves, of which the Apostle speaks, *Behold this something that ye sorrowed after a godly sort; what fear it wrought in you,* 2 Cor. 7. 11. or jealousy of your selves.

Now this Gospel-jealousie over a mans self, brings him to much self-searching; a work that all natural men are unaccustomed to. There is a backwardness in men by nature to come to a tryal; as a crasie body will not endure the tryal of the Weather, nor a sore Eye the tryal of the light. Men whose state is evil, *love darkness rather than light.* John 3. 19. When the heart is unsound, it is tedious and grievous to be searched; but where there is true Grace, it puts Psal. 119. 59. men upon it. *I have examined my ways,* saith *David.* He did by himself, as *Caleb* and *Joshua* did by *Canaan*; they Numb. 14. searched the Land, and gave a true report of it. So will Lam. 3. 40. every good man do: *Let us search and try our ways.*

And he will desire to be searched and discovered by a better Eye than his own: *Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any way of wickedness in me;* he saith not, see if there be any sin, for no man is free from that. Saint *Paul* speaks of *sin that dwelt in him.* Rom. 7. 17. But any indulgence or allowance of sin, any sin that is incompatible to a Saint, any way that differs from *the way everlasting, the good old way, the way that is called holy.* Jer. 6. 16. Isa. 35. 8. A gracious heart is still casting out its scum.

It is true, a carnal man, a bold hypocrite may say, See me, 2 Kings 10. 16. as *Jehoiada* did to *Jehonadab*, but not search me. Come, *see my zeal for the Lord of hosts.* But tho he would be seen without, yet not within. This was the Spirit of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, they would have their outsides seen, they did the good they did to be seen: But they durst not have their inside seen, where was *nothing but rottenness and corruption,* Matth. 6. Matth. 23. 27. John 2. 25. as *Jesus* said, who knew them within.

But.

But now, when a man keeps a godly jealousie over his heart at all times, and is frequently making his request to God, *Job 34. 32. Lord search me, and what I see not, teach thou me;* and is inquisitive to find out the *Achan*; the Sin that troubles God, and troubles his own peace, whether it be a sin of profit or pleasure, constitution or calling; that it may be judged and cut off; this is a sign of sincerity, which is the great vain of saving Grace, and that which commends a man to God.

Rom. 2. 28. 29. 2 Cor. 1. 12. Where therefore, there is this godly sincerity, it runs it self into these four heads, as the River of Eden did.

2 Cor. 7. 11. Lam. 3. 40. Psal. 139. 24. 1. A godly jealousie over a mans self, as hath been shewed.
2. Diligence in self-searching, and desire to be helped herein: *Let us search and try our ways. And search me, O God, and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts.*

Psal. 141. 5. 3. Gladness to have unknown failings discovered, tho by others: *Let the righteous smite me, and it shall be a kindness.*

4. A desire to grow more and more sincere, for this Grace is but in part, as well as others, and hath opposition from the reliques of the natural deceitfulness of heart. So that nothing is more prayed for by a sincere Soul, than still more sincerity:

Psal. 119. 80. *Lord, let my heart be sound in thy statutes.* There is a desire after that ἀπολογία, that self clearing, or willingness to approve our selves to God, spoken of by the Holy Ghost, *2 Cor. 7. 11. Saith Peter, Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee. As of sincerity, as of God; in the sight of God,*

John 21. 17. 2 Cor. 2. 17. *As of sincerity, as of God; in the sight of God, speak we in Christ.* Not as many, which corrupt the word of God, play the Hucksters with it, make our own advantage of it, Sophisticate it; as Wine with Water or other Liquors; so they with their own notions and phancies. But as of sincerity, we preach that which is the pure Word of God; and in the sight of God, we preach it as if God were present.

Secondly, Where saving Grace is, there is poverty of Spirit. Poverty of Spirit accompanies every Grace, and discovers other Graces. Repentance and godly Sorrow for sin, are ever acted with a desire of more, and so is Faith; *Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief,* and so is every Grace. Proud men may have gifts; so had false Apostles, and false Brethren in the Apostles days. But none except humble men have Grace: *He giveth grace to the humble.* Where Grace is, it much abaseth

baseth

baseth a man in his own eyes. How low was holy *Paul* in his own eyes, who reputed himself to have been *the chief of sinners*? and when he was in a state of Grace, *Less than the least of all Saints*.

It was Pride, that shewed there was no grace, in that *Pharisees* confession: *God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, nor as this Publican.* Indeed, when a man can fill such a confession with humility, and a sense of his own remaining unworthiness, and ascribe what he is, to the grace of God in Christ, as the Apostle did; *by the grace of God, I am what I am*: Here Poverty of spirit is evidently seen. *1 Cor. 13. 9.* And poverty of spirit doth not only evidence the being of Grace, but also helps to increase it. High hills have most air, and the most pleasant prospects; but low valleys are more fruitful; so men of fair parts, and profession, may make a great show in the Church, and please themselves and their own humours; but they are the poor in spirit that grow in Grace, and bring forth fruit to God; the other, to themselves, as *Hos. 10. 13.* *Israel* did; but these to God; their fruit returns to him from whom it comes.

God is taken with a man that is poor in spirit, as well as with Saints and Angels in Heaven: *I dwell in the high and holy place, Isa. 57. 15.* *with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble; to give life to his graces, and to his comforts.* Great is that Promise made to this grace by Jesus Christ his own mouth; *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* And by the Lord, who hath Heaven for his Throne, and Earth for his Foot-stool: *To this man will I look, Isa. 66. 22.* *even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit.* So that sincerity and poverty of spirit, are two infallible touch-stones of saving Grace.

Thirdly, saving Grace is a deep inward work: so is not the most specious profession of Religion, or common Grace. Take the best of another man, and it is of another nature. All that the Apostle accumulates and may be spoken of a natural man, being enlightened in the mysteries of the Gospel, having a taste of the heavenly gift, of the goodness of Christ, *Heb. 6. 4, 5, 6.* the gift of God, and being a partaker of the extraordinary *John 4. 10.* gifts of the Holy Ghost; and having a taste of the goodness of the word of God, as *Herod heard John many things gladly* *Mark 6. 10.* and

- Matt. 13. 20. and the stony ground *received the word, on a sudden, with joy,*
 and a taste of the powers of the world to come, as *Balaam had,*
 Numb. 23. 10. *Let me die the death of the Righteous, and let my last end be like*
his : All this may not amount to a deep inward work ; and
 therefore all may be lost ; they may be but flashes that come
 and go like lightning : they have not rooting deep enough,
 they will endure but a while ; as our Saviour saith, *Matt 13. 22.*
 A Hypocrite may have as specious actions as a man that
 hath true Grace. With what zeal, and how like a godly
 Prince did *Jehu* destroy *Baal* and his Worshippers ? but a gra-
 cious heart was in none of all that, the great difference betwixt
 a Hypocrite and a real Saint, lyes in the bottom of the heart :
Amaziah did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but
not with a perfect heart.
 2 Kings 10.
 2 Chron. 25.
 I. Real Saints, and others that have but common grace, may be
 outwardly like one another ; but there is a vast difference
 within. *The kings daughter is all glorious within :* But a Hy-
 pocrite's inside is full of all uncleannesse. It is true, where there
 is saving Grace, there is precious outwork too. As the Tem-
 ple was of stately Building without ; which made the Dis-
 ciples to admire it : but the Holy Place, the Holy of Holies
 within the Temple, had the greatest Glory. Thus where there
 is saving grace ; men are *Holiness to the Lord* without, this is
 written upon all their ways and works, even their common
 works ; *Their conversation is in heaven ; they are alive unto*
God through Jesus Christ. As a candle in a lanthorn gives
 light without the Lanthorn as well as within : so Grace appears
 without, as well as within.
 Zec. 14. 20.
 Phil. 3. 20.
 Rom. 6. 11.
 Gal. 2. 20.
 Eph. 3. 17.
 Jer. 31. 33.
 Rom. 5. 5.
 Rom. 7.
 1 Pet. 3. 4.
 Rom. 7. 25.
 1 John 3. 9.
 Matt. 7.
 24, 25.
 Matth 13. 21. Profession of Religion, are but temporary things ; hard times
 will

will wither them. But there is an eternity in saving grace; it is here begun, and in Heaven perfected into glory. As Gold, by fire; so Grace by temptations is not destroyed, but refined. *Tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and* Rom. 5. 3, 4. *experience, hope.*

Observe your selves therefore, whether the Kingdom of God be within you? whether he exerciseth his Government over your Hearts, your wills and affections, and all your faculties. Observe, whether God be *in you of a truth; know ye not that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?* whether ye are diligent to make the inside clean, besides what you do outwardly. What disowning and hating of sin there is within. Observe what converse you have with God, such as *David* had when he said, *my meditation of him shall be sweet.* Rom. 7. 15. Psal. 14. 34. Gal. 4. 6. Whether the Spirit of Christ is, and works in you, as a *spirit of grace and supplication*, as a Spirit of Holiness, a Spirit of Truth, a teaching, leading, witnessing, sealing, assisting, quickening, establishing spirit? Grace is a deep inward work. Angels converse together mentally; and so do God and Saints, and Christ and gracious Souls. As the Babe in the womb of *Elizabeth* sprang for joy at the Salutation of *Mary*; so God often speaks to a believer with that soft and secret voice, as *Luke 1. 44.* makes his heart to do the like.

Fourthly, Saving grace is discovered by the strong tendency of the heart to God; to walk with him as *Enoch* did; to do his will, as *David* did; to enjoy him, as *Asaph*; *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee. And it is good for me to draw near to God. With my soul have I desired thee in the night,* saith the Prophet *Isaiah*; *yea with my spirit within me will I seek thee early.* Grace must needs carry the Soul to its Original and Spring, which is God; *Isa. 25. 9.* But is the whole tendency and inclination of the Soul to God, where there is Grace? No, not actually, tho' positively it be. For first, the Heart may be bent upon other things when it is bent upon God; upon other things subordinately, but ultimately upon God himself. So there may be a regulated self-love; love to relations, and to many other persons and things. I say, when the heart moves to these regularly, the motion at length reacheth to God himself, because it reacheth to the will of God, and the glory of God. As a ship that sails with a side-wind, in time comes to the landing-place.

Quest. But may there not be a tendency in a gracious Soul to things contrary to God?

Ans. Yes there may be, and often is; because there is a contrary principle, even where grace is; viz. The corruption of nature: as there were two contrary Nations in *Rebecca's* womb together.

The corruption of nature always carries the heart from God, as *Absalom* did the hearts of the people from *David*. Yet either it is by force, as the ravishing of a *Damsel* in the Law, and then the Soul cries out as the *Damsel* did; as *Paul*, *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?* Or else by deceit, and that will soon be discovered; And when it is, it is bewailed.

The *Mariners Needle* often waves from the North point, but by instinct still returns to it again. So a gracious Soul may be diverted from God, as *Solomon* was by his strange wives; yet is it still restless till it returns to God again; as the *Jews* said, *I will return unto my first husband; for then was it better with me than now.* The bowl must not be valued by its rubs, but by its byas. Where there is Grace, the heart in all its diversions from God to the Creature, still desires after God; as *Phaltiel* hankerd after his wife, when taken from him; and as *Jonah* longed after the Temple, when in the belly of Hell: *Yet will I look towards thy holy temple.* Grace being of the Divine Nature, it doth as naturally move the Soul towards God, as the sparks fly upward.

Fifthly, Where there is Grace, a man busieth himself much about *Jesus Christ*. The Spouse was not well without him: *Paul* desired and sought nothing more, than the knowledge of *Jesus Christ*, and conformity to him: *Christ* is a holy mans great Employment.

1. Because all saving grace comes from *Christ*, and therefore thither it returns again, as the waters into the Sea.

2. Grace shews us our need of *Christ*, how that without him we can do nothing: not I, but *Christ* liveth in me. Therefore *Christ* must needs be our great business.

3. Grace discovers the excellencies of *Jesus Christ*. A man never sees the beauty and loveliness of *Christ* till he have grace. Natural men may in their way be fond of *Christ*, as a meer superstitious Papist that reverences his Picture: But no natural

natural men can know his excellencies by sound knowledge and experience. As Children may be fond of a piece of Gold, but know not the worth of it. It is grace that teacheth a man to say, *my beloved is the chiefest of ten thousand.*

4. Grace makes a man abound in wishes to be liker and liker Christ, in his spirit and temper of mind: in his humility, and obedience to his Father, and in his Praying; *Lord teach us to pray*, say the Disciples; grace doth make a man like Christ, and makes him seek to be liker: for it is *from his fulness that we receive, and grace for grace.* Phil. 2. 5. Luc. 11. 1. John 1. 16.

Now tho no man doth attain to perfection in these things; yet every man that hath grace, follows after perfection: *Not that I have already attained, but I follow after.* Phil. 2. 12.

CHAP. XXXV.

Sheweth the opinion which many men have of their own Merits. From the whole 29 Verse.

And he answering, said to his Father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends.

HERE the elder Son hath the confidence to tell his Father of his exact services, and the reward he expected upon that account. Whence we may observe,

Doct. That the conceit which natural men have of their own Righteousness, especially Moralists, and seemingly religious men, swell up to the opinion of Merit.

This was the spirit of the Jews of old; *wherefore have we fasted, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge?* They speak, as thinking they had deserved better of God. Such men kiss their hands to their own Righteousness and Works, as Job speaks the practice of Idolaters. Every man naturally hath a Pope in his belly; Job 31. 27. something of his own to commend him to God, and let him into Heaven: *Good master, what good thing shall I do that I may*

Matth. 20.

Rom. 9. 32.

Luc. 7. 4. 7.

Job 41. 34.

Jer. 48. 29.

2 Cor. 10. 5.

Exod. 5. 2.

Gen. 3.

2 Chro. 32. 26.

2 Cor. 12. 8.

Job 33. 17.

Rev. 3. 17.

Mal. 1. 6. 7.

have eternal life? I will not have Heaven gratis, said a Roman-Catholick. Give me that eternal life which thou owest me, said another. We find in that Parable of the Vinyard, that the first labourers in the Vinyard, (which were the Jews) quarrelled with God, that their pay was no more: It is plain that Israel sought Righteousness by the works of the Law: And the Rhem. Annotations on Heb. 6. 10. *God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love; Say, That God should be unjust, if he should not give men Heaven for their good works; and that for their good works they are worthy of eternal life.*

Bellarmino, the Church of Romes great Champion, taught, That a man had a double right to the Kingdom of Heaven: Partly, by his own merits; and partly, by the merits of Christ; Tho when he came to dye, he altered his mind. The Elders of the Jews tell Jesus, that the Centurion was worthy, though himself thought not so, *I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof: and I am not worthy to come to thee.*

Reas. 1. Now the Reason of this conceit in natural men, is their pride: Man is a proud creature, one of the sons of pride: He is easily puffed up with fancies of his own excellencies: *We have heard of the pride of Moab, he is exceeding proud; his loftiness, and his arrogancy, and the haughtiness of his heart.* The Apostle speaks of *imaginations and high thoughts in man, that exalt themselves against God.*

Naturally man would not own subjection to God: Man looked upon his first estate as below him; as the Angels that fell, did; and therefore sought a higher; Something of this will sometimes surprize the best men: so *Hezekiah* was fain to humble himself for *the pride of his heart*; and *Paul* had a *thorn in the flesh, lest he should be exalted above measure.* And therefore God is fain to take many courses to hide pride from man.

Reas. 2. Another Reason of this conceit of merit in natural men, is, their ignorance of their sinful nature, and the sinfulness of their best works; They see not that self, that hypocrisie that is in them; they observe not how little God is, either in the beginning or end of their best works. *Thou saidst, I am rich; and knowest not that thou art poor.* Those Jews knew not, or would not know, that they had despised Gods.

Gods name; and polluted it: *Wherein have we despised thy name? and wherein have we polluted thee?* There are many things which are highly esteemed of men; many of their own works, which yet are an abomination in the sight of God. *Luke 16. 15. Isa. 1. 11, 12.* The Jews had soaring, self-blessing thoughts of their multitude of Sacrifices. Doubtless their opinion was, that God was beholden to them on this account, and did them not right, that he took no more notice of them, and rewarded them no better; when as alas; God called them *vain oblations*, and *their incense was an abomination to him*; he could not away with their *solemn meetings*, they were *iniquity*; his *soul hated their new moons*; they were a trouble to him, he was weary to bear them.

Reas. 3. A third Reason why they especially of the Church of Rome hold up the Doctrine of Merit, is, because it is to their profit; it brings them in great Revenues: It's a rich and wealthy Doctrine: They have an art of making Silver and Gold with it more effectually than ever any Alchymist could do with the Philosophers stone. And besides, they uphold other Doctrines of their Church by this: This, and that of Venial sins, and that Concupiscence is not sin in the Regenerate; and many more; as stones in an Arch uphold one another.

USE First, Let this make you very cautious against this infection, conceit of meriting of God by the good you do: Christ is much wronged this way; merit becomes not the mouth, no, nor the thoughts of a creature; no creature can merit of God, neither Saints nor Angels: There is but one that merits, as there is but one Mediator, Jesus Christ.

Adam could not have merited of God if he had stood in his Innocency, for he had done but his duty: What had he that he received not? And for him to think of merit, would have been to have gloried in what he received, as tho he received it not: Should the holy Angels have a thought of merit, it would stain their glory, and change them into Devils. *1 Cor. 4. 7. 1 Tim. 3. 6.*

Those glorified creatures cast down their Crowns before the Throne of God with this language, *Thou art worthy, Thou, and not we, to receive glory, and honour, and power.* And *Rev. 4. 10, 11.* can there be merit on earth, when there is none in Heaven?

To speak of the creatures meriting of God, as it is a proud, so a most absurd Doctrine. Where is the man that hath Go-

spel-Grace, but abhors the thoughts of merit? He knows by experience, that there is no more place for this now, than when he was in a graceless state. He knows that he never doth above his duty, but under it. He knows that he gives God nothing but what is his own: When *David* and his people offered so largely, he saith, *Of thine own, O Lord, have we given thee. We are not sufficient of our selves, as of our selves, to think any thing, all our sufficiency is of God.*

If we can merit of God, why do we pray daily for our daily bread? Beggars merit not their alms.

How much Scripture doth the Doctrine of merit outface? I reckon that the sufferings of this present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. What are light afflictions for a moment, when compared with an exceeding and eternal weight of glory? Doth the master thank his servant for doing what he was commanded? I trow not; so ye, when ye shall have done all that is commanded you, say, *We are unprofitable servants.* So St. Paul, *Who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed to him again?* For of him, and to him, and through him are all things, to him be Glory for ever. So the same Apostle, *By grace are you saved through faith, and that not of your selves, it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.* And of himself and his own righteousness, he saith thus, *That I may be found in him, that is, in Christ, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ.* But the time would fail me, as the Apostle saith in another case, to tell you all the Scriptures say against mans meriting of God. Take only these few observations further.

1. Observe upon what terms the Seed of *Abraham* became the Lords people, above all other people. *The Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people to himself;* but why? *The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more than other people, for ye were the fewest of all people; but because the Lord loved you:* It was an act of free Grace in God to make them his People. And observe also, upon what terms they possessed the Land of *Canaan.* *Speak not in thy heart, saying, for my righteousness the Lord hath brought me in to possess this land: no, not for thy righteousness, or the uprightness of thy heart; for thou art a stiff-necked people.*

2. Consider, that the best of men are not their own, but are *bought with a price*. Now if thou art not thy own, how can any thing thou hast, be thine own to make money of it? 1 Cor. 6. 20.

3. If we make God our debtor, why did our Lord Jesus Christ order us in our daily prayers, to beg of God to forgive us our debts? If the People of God may merit by their own righteousness, why do they disclaim it, as *filthy rags*? and why do they need a high Priest to *bear the iniquities of their holy things*? And why do they need the *Incense* of the Angel of the Covenant to mix with their prayers, when offered to God? Matth. 6. 1 Cor. 6. 20. Heb. 2. 17. Rev. 8. 3. 4.

4. If merit carries it with God, why then do the best and worst fare alike in this life? *All things come alike to all, there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked*. Yea, why do the worst fare best, sometimes, and the best worst? The worst have *more than heart can wish* in their Life, and have *no bands in their death*; and the best are *scourged all the day long*. Ecc. 9. 2. Psalm 73.

5. The merit of man makes Jesus Christ but half a Saviour, his title to Salvation to be partly from his own merits, and partly from Christs; as *Bellarmino* asserted, till he was fain to lay down his weapons, and forced to let the argument fall, and retract. Those very Fathers that the Papists cry up for themselves, are against them in this point; especially *St. Augustine*, who was a stout defender of Grace, against the pride of nature in man, and the opinion of his own merits.

But besides the Fathers, they are against themselves; *Bellarmino* against *Bellarmino*, *Propter incertitudinem propriae Justitiae, & periculum humanae gloriae; tutissimum est, &c.* In regard of the uncertainty of mans own righteousness, and the danger of boasting, it is the safest way to put all our trust in the Mercy of God, and Merits of Christ. And another of them confesseth, that the purchase of Christ, and merit of man, is a contradiction. De Justif. lib. 5. c. 7.

6. Consider, That man cannot add any thing to Gods advantage or happiness, by all the good he doth: *Can a man be profitable to God, as he that is wise may be profitable to himself? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that thou art righteous? Or is it gain to him that thou makest thy way perfect?* It is a Condescension in God to take pleasure in his Saints, not only on Earth, but in Heaven, where they have no sin. Christ obligeth him, and his Promises.

Promise obligeth him, but there is not any thing in man that can oblige him.

7. All the good any man doth, is duty, and debt to God ;
 Luke 17. 10. and how can the payment of debts, merit?

It is true, Creditors may take what they please of their debt, the one half for all. But where did God ever say he would thus compound with his Creatures? God stands as strictly in his Gospel-Covenant to have the whole debt paid, as he did in the Covenant of Works. Only he is content in the second Covenant to take payment of Christ our surety, who is therefore called the *surety of a better covenant*.
 Heb. 7. 22.

Obj. The Patrons of this Doctrine of merit, urge that Parable, *Blessed are those servants, whom when their Lord cometh, he shall find watching; verily I say unto you, he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them*.
 Luc. 12. 37.

Ans. I answer, That this is an act of Grace, and not of debt. It is a point of Honour, and not Merit; as, *Lo*, thus shall it be done to the man whom the King delighteth to honour. *This honour have all his Saints*.

Obj. But the Scriptures speak of a reward, *In keeping of them (thy commandments) there is great reward. Verily there is a reward for the righteous. Great is your reward in heaven*. *Ans.* It is a reward of Grace, and not of Debt. That which our Saviour, *Matth. 5. 46.* calls reward; in *Luk. 6. 32.* he calls grace or favour.
 Psal. 149. 9.
 Psal. 19. 11.
 Psal. 58. 11.

Obj. But they say further, That *Merit* and *Reward*, are *Relatives*, and therefore the one suppoeth the other, as a Son supposeth a Father.

Ans. I answer, That God is pleased to call Heaven our *Reward*, in relation to the Merits of Christ, and to his Promise; by both which he hath obliged himself; but in relation to us, it is called, *The gift of God*.

Obj. But Christ calls men into Heaven at the last, upon the account of their Works, *Matth. 25. 34.* *Come ye blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you: for I was an hungry, and ye fed me; thirsty, and ye gave me drink; naked, and ye clothed me, &c.*

Ans. I answer, 1. He will reward men according to their works, but not for them. As in our Justification we are said to be justified

stified by Faith, or through Faith, but never for our Faith: So men shall be judged according to their Works, but not for them. Good works have a place of Order in mens Salvation, but not of Causality.

2. Christ saith, *Inherit the kingdom prepared for you.* He saith not, *Inherit the Kingdom which ye have merited:* but which my Father hath prepared for you. God may say to those, who bid their own Works and Righteousness for Heaven, as the Prophet of himself, *A goodly price do they value Heaven at!* Zach. 11. 13. a poor Heaven that is worth no more than their works. Men may merit their damnation: *O Israel, thou hast destroyed thy self;* but not their Salvation. Hos. 13. 9.

Obj. But some may further urge that in Rev. 3. 4. *They shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy.*

Ans. 1. They judge not themselves worthy: *I am not worthy* Math. 3. 11. *to bear his shoes,* saith John the Baptist of Christ. *I am not worthy thou shouldst come under my roof,* saith the Centurion, a man of great Faith. Luc. 7. 6, 7.

2. As it is spoken by Christ, it is a word of Honour, as in 1 Sam. 1. 5. Not of Merit and Justice.

3. If they be worthy, it is by Christs righteousness, and not 2 Cor. 5. 21. their own: *We are made the righteousness of God in him.*

8ly, Amongst many evils that follow the Doctrine of mans meriting of God, observe these two,

1. It keeps men from being humble. Those that embrace it, will never be low and vile in their own eyes; they will never call themselves *dust and ashes*, as Abraham did, nor *abhor themselves in dust and ashes*, as Job did; nor cry out, *I am vile*, as he did; nor repute themselves *less than the least of all Saints*, as Paul did; nor cry out as he did, *O wretched man that I am!* Gen. 18. 27. Job 24. 6. and 40. 4. Eph. 3. 8. Rom 7. 4. Jam. 4. 6. Now God looks on such as his great enemies: *He resists the proud.* They are not capable of Grace: *He giveth grace to the humble. Intus existens prohibet alienum.* A proud heart is no more capable of Grace, than a vessel full of Water, is to receive Wine.

2. The Doctrine of Merit destroys the free-grace of God, Gal. 1. and brings in another Gospel, as the Galatians did, who were for justification by the works of the Law. *If it be of works,* saith Rom. 11. 6. the Apostle, *then it is no more grace.* And surely Devils may be saved as soon as such men, that overthrow the free-grace of God: Eph. 2. 8, 9. *By grace ye are saved; not of works, lest any man should boast.*

But doth the Doctrine of free-grace destroy good Works?

L I

Quest.
Ans.

Ans.

Rom. 3. 31.

No, it establisheth them, as the Apostle said of Faith: *Do we make void the law through faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the law.* None more observant of the Law, than Believers; and none more abounding in good works, than those who live in the sense of free-Grace. They know they are chosen that they should be holy. And that they are redeemed, that they should be zealous of good works. And that they are the workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, that they should walk in them. Free-Grace lets them into Heaven, and their good works follow them.

Eph. 1. 4

Titus 2. 14

Eph. 2. 10.

Rev. 14. 13.

Heb. 12. 14.

Tho no man be saved for his holiness, yet no man can be saved without it. You should be as zealous of good works, as if you were to be saved by them; and yet impute nothing to them, as to the Merit of Salvation. To work in obedience to God, and so in order to Salvation, is your duty: but the purchase of Salvation is Christs Merit and Bounty: *It is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.* Tho your good and holy Works do not merit, yet they are necessary for good uses: tho they do not merit, yet they are not in vain; but of great consequence: *Wherefore, my brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; for as much as ye know your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.*

Rom. 6. 23.

Titus 3. 14.

1. Cor. 15. 58.

Heb. 11. 6.

God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. But the reward is of Promise, not of Debt, further then his Promise makes him a Debtor to his People. And therefore let us be humble in the thoughts of our best works. Let us still walk humbly with God. If he should mark iniquity, who should stand? We need Gods Attribute of Mercy when we are at best. All that are acquainted with the sin that dwelleth in them, with the flesh that lusteth against the spirit, with the law in the members, that warreth against the law of their mind, with the iniquities of their holy things, with the deceitfulness, and hardness, and selfishness of their hearts, with their envying at the prosperity of the wicked, and discontent at their own condition; with their frequent distrust of God, and their dull affections to Jesus Christ, and those many and daily infirmities in their hearts and lives: Let them tell us, if they can, what room or reason there is left in them for Merit? and whether they have not need of Christ when they are at best? And of sparing Mercy when they have done all? As well as *Nehemiah, Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy.*

Mich. 6. 8.

Psal. 30. 3.

Rom. 7. 16.

Gal. 5. 17.

Rom. 7. 23.

Neh. 13. 21.

C H A P. XXXVI.

Sheweth, How much it is in the nature of man, to find fault with God. From part of the 29, and 30. Verses.

Thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy Living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted Calf.

SEE here the base Reflections of this man; how full of quarrel with his Father, with whom he finds fault, for his under-doing to himself, and over-doing to his younger Brother? Whence we learn,

Dock. That it is the nature of man to find fault and quarrel with God about his Dispensations. This ill Disposition hath appeared in man ever since the fall.

We may see it in the *Jews*, from their beginning to their end, of whom this elder Son was the Representative.

They chide with God in the wilderness; not only with *Mo-* Exod. 7. 17.
ses, but with the Lord. Therefore the place where they did it, was named *Meribah*, that is, chiding, or strife; because of the chiding of the Children of *Israel*, and because they tempted the Lord, saying, *Is the Lord amongst us, or not?* They charged it upon Ez. 18. 25.
 the Lord, Ez. 18. that his ways were not equal; In so much, as he was fain to prove the Justice of his actions, both in this Chap. and chap. 33. *Are not my ways equal?* Whose ways can be equal, if mine be not?

They found fault with his Worship and Service, as unprofitable, *What is the Almighty that we should serve him? and what profit have we, if we shall pray unto him? Since we left off to burn incense to the Queen of Heaven, we have wanted all things.* Jer. 44. 18.

They would not own that God had shewed any love to them above other people: *Wherein hast thou loved us?* Their late Mal. 1. 2.
 captivity stuck in their Stomachs, and bred hard thoughts in them of God; in so much as God was fain to prove that he had loved them: *Was not Esau Jacobs brother? Yet I loved Jacob, and hated Esau:* I have not loved *Esau* as I did your Father *Jacob*. It is true, you went into Captivity: but I have returned you again to your own country: but I have not done so by *Esau's* posterity: *O Idumea, I will make thee most desolate.* In the *Hebrew*, desolation, and desolation. I might Ez. 35. 3, 7, 15.
 abound in instances, but take only this one more.

They did so find fault with God and his ways; that they changed him for other gods: *Hath a nation changed their Gods? Which are yet no Gods. But my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit. Be astonished ye heavens at this.*

And this is not only the spirit of the Jews, but it is every mans disposition by nature, to find fault and quarrel with God. To quarrel his sovereignty, that he should pick and chuse the objects of his grace, as he pleaseth; that he should have mercy, on whom he will have mercy: *why doth he yet find fault, for who hath resisted his will?* Here men pick a quarrel with Gods freedom in bestowing his saving grace; they cannot endure that he should make this difference betwixt men and men, when as he found all a like in Adam.

Yea, they are so sawcy, as to question all Gods Attributes. As his Power; *can God prepare a table in the wilderness?* And his Mercy, Ez. k. 33. 10. *We shall pine away in our sins: There is no relief for us in his mercy.* In so much, that God was fain to swear against them herein, to clear himself: v. 11. *As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that he turn from his wicked way, and live: And so his Justice; these last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal to us, who have born the heat of the day. And his Wisdom, As the wile Gentiles counted the Gospel the foolishness of God. And his Truth; which made the Apostle so zealously assert it; Let God be true, and every man a liar. Where is the promise of his coming? say those scoffers. But why should I go further in the proof of that which is seen every where?*

And men do also find fault with the Laws of God. *I have written to him the great things of my Law, but they were counted as a strange thing.* Men cannot bear Gods Legislative Power: *As for the word thou hast spoken to us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken to thee, but we will certainly do whatsoever goeth forth out of our own mouth.* Man strives with God for Will. How impudently have the Church of Rome expunged the second Commandment? And how many amongst our selves have sought to make void the fourth? Man by nature is an enemy to the Law of God: *he is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.* He cannot, there is impotency; he will not, there is impudency. Men would be their own Lords, and know no other: *Our lips are our own; who is lord over us?*

4. Men find fault, and quarrel at the Gospel. It was and is a stumbling block to the Jews, and to the Greeks foolishness. The Doctrine of Christ was full of hard sayings. And Christ him-

self was despicable in their eyes : *Is not this the carpenters son? we will not have this man to reign over us. He came to his own and his own received him not;* his miracles, that should have convinced them, that he was more than man. these they refer to the power of the Devil, and not to the Power of God: *He casteth out Devils by Beelzebub the Prince of Devils.* And notwithstanding Gods Judgment on that Nation these 1600 years for their unbelief, they will not believe in him to this day. And the greatest part of the world are still infidels, 19. Parts of 31, as men of judgment compute. Self-denial, justification by faith, and not by works, and the like, are Doctrines which natural men cannot down with, but abhor.

John 6. 16.
Matt. 13. 54.
Luc 19. 14.
John 1. 11.
Matth. 12. 24.

5. Men are prone to find fault with the Ordinances and Instituted worship of God. The Jews in the Old Testament left Gods Institutions, and set up Altars of their own, and Images and high Places, and Groves : God complains much of them for it. And this was their spirit in Christs time: *In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrine the traditions of men*

Muth. 15. 9.

6. Man is prone to find fault and quarrel with the Providence of God. Some of the Heathens have denied it in these sublunary things, as being below him. And those that own it, yet are offended at it; as that great man was, *This evil is of the Lord, what should I wait for the Lord any longer?*

Ecles. 7. 10.

It is usual with men to quarrel at the present times, which the Preacher rebuked: *say not thou what is the cause that the former days were better than these?* And it is common with us to quarrel with our conditions, comparing them with better, not with worse. Many of the Angels thought their first estate below them; and so did man, and therefore aspired to a higher. It is an eye-sore to some men, that there be just men, to whom it happens according to the work of the wicked: and wicked men, to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous. Not considering, that Gods judgments are a great deep. Many Providences have been an offence to the Godly themselves. Job confessed, that he uttered things that he understood not, things too wonderful for him, which he knew not. And Jonah was offended at Gods dealing with Nineveh; yea, about that trifle, his gourd. Asaph was so dissatisfied to see how matters went in his days, that he was tempted to look on Godliness as a vain thing, *Verily, saith he, I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency; for all the day long have I been pligued, and chastened every morning.* And Jeremiah, tho he premised his persuasion of Gods Righteousness, yet he would reason the case with God, *Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper?*

Ecles. 8. 14.
Psal. 36. 6.

Job. 42. 3.

Psal. 73. 13, 14.

Jer. 12. 1.

prosper? wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously? But yet this was only a sudden passion in them, a surprizal by a temptation, that went off presently again, like the fit of an ague. Whereas it is the constitution of bad men, to think evil of Providence, when they do not speak it out: neither do they rebuke themselves in the sin, nor mourn for it, nor strive against it, as these servants of God did.

I come now to the reasons of this Point.

1. It is from mans pride; *through pride comes contention.* Contention and strife with God, as well as with men. It was pride and aspiring after great things, that made Angels and Men, at first, to fall out with God; and the Woman to believe the Serpent, rather than God. Pride makes men drunk with a sort of mad discontent. *The proud is as he that transgresseth by wine;* and we know drunkards are quarrellous.

2. The lust of man is the reason of his quarrelling with God: Men would have their lusts, and God crosses them, *Ye lust and have not, ye ask and receive not, because ye ask, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.* Amnon will have Tamar, and Israel will have flesh, and Herod will have Herodias, and Rachel will have children, and Zebedees sons will have honour: And when men lust and have not, or if they have, and miss of their expectation in that they have; this bloweth the coals of discontent and murmuring, even at God. Lust must have much, and after all, is unsatiable. Bread from Heaven, and Water out of the Rock will not serve Israels lusts; but they must have Flesh from Heaven too, and chide with God for it.

3. Satan eggs and puts men on to find fault with God: He made Eve apprehend that God was too strict with them, in forbidding them the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil; and he used all his art to have provoked Job to have charged God foolishly; and he prevailed with Adam to charge his sin on God; *The woman which thou gavest me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.* As the Devil provoked David to number the people; so he provokes men to quarrel with God: He would bring men, if he could, to curse God to his face, as he would have done by Job.

Application. And let us all take heed of this unclean spirit: Man is a foolish creature in thinking to get any thing of God, by his peevish and froward spirit, *With the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward;* or thou wilt wrestle. We contend with one

Reas. 1.
Prov. 13. 10.
Gen. 2. 17.
Gen. 3. 1, 5.
Hab. 2. 5.

Jam. 4. 2, 3.
2 Sam. 13.
Numb. 11.
Matth. 14.
Matth. 20.

Numb. 11. 6.

Job 1. and 2.

1 Chr. 21. 1.

Psal. 18. 26.

one infinitely above our match, if we contend with God: It would be a strange world, and man would be a strange creature, if he might be, or things might be after his mind. Let little children have their will, and they will eat trash, and take knives into their hands, and play with fire, and any thing that would be hurtful to them: and thus would it be with man if he might have his will of God; he would do, as it is said of that Prince; *Speak great words against the most high, and he would change times and laws, states and conditions, yea, Heaven and Earth, as they said, Come, let us build a tower that shall reach to heaven.* And as the Philosopher wished, That he were but one hour at the Sun, to see the nature of its body, tho he was burnt with it after: And *Pliny* would not be satisfied, till he went so far to see the cause of the fiery eruptions of *Vesuvius*, that he was smothered to death with it. Which shews the unruliness of humane appetites, which way soever they tend

Job 34. 33.

Dan. 7. 25.

Gen. 11.

We read in Scripture of murmuring for want, as *Israel* for Water, *Exod.* 15. 23, 24. And God is pleased to bear with this passion; he winked at this, as it is said he did at the times of their ignorance. But then there is a murmuring out of wantonness; such was *Israel's* murmuring, because they had no flesh, and this God punished severely: Oh take heed of quarrelling with God from the suggestions of wantonness and lust. Be sure that your finding fault with Gods dispensations will be to your great prejudice, It is so great a sin: it is the very scum and froth of a corrupt nature.

Acts 17. 30.
Numb. 11. 6.

Remember our Saviours words, *mans life, that is, the comfort of his life, consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth.* This we see in *Haman*, *All this availeth me nothing.* A little that one righteous man hath, is better than the treasures of many wicked. That a man should eat and drink, and that his soul should enjoy good in his labour, *This is the gift of God.* So that let a mans condition be never so low, he should not be rash and passionately eager, to raise himself to a higher. If God do it, he will teach you how to bear it, and use it. Stay till the Master of the Feast bids you sit higher. And low thoughts of your selves will make you content with a low condition, and to condescend to men of a low estate. Christians should be more troubled at the littleness of Grace, than at the littleness of their outward condition, whether in respect of Wealth, Honour, or otherwise. Oh take heed of being offended at Gods disposal of you: There are mysteries in Providence as

Luke 12. 15.
Est. 5. 14.
Psal. 37. 16.
Eccl. 2. 2.

Rom. 9. 20.

well

well as in the Scripture. Humane Reason is soon giddy with looking into the heighth and depth of Gods *unsearchable judgments, and his ways which are past finding out*. It is arrogancy and folly in the highest degree, to measure the Infinite Willdom of God, by the narrow reason of man. It is our great disadvantage, when we do not *know our selves to be but men*, and God to be the Lord, to whom *secret things belong*. What would you think of a man that should ask God, why he made him not an Angel? If you give way to finding fault with your present lot, it will rise to that at last; lust knows no limits. You know what a man he was, that said, *O that I were made judg in the land!* There is need that God should at some seasons bring his people into a low condition; as *Paul* needed a thorn in the flesh. A skilful Musician sometimes brings his strings lower, when the Song requires it. And truly there are none of us, but may rather wonder at what we have, than at what we want, as *Jacob* did, *O God, I am less than the least of all the mercy, and all the truth that thou hast shewed me*. How many would be glad of our leavings? If we murmur and complain, what may such do, who have much less than we have?

I shall close with a few words of advice.

1. Remember that our finding fault with Gods dispensations is much to our own damage; like the Arrows that 'tis said, *Cæsar* caused to be shot at *Jupiter*, for a foul day, that hindered his intended march: these came short of Heaven, and fell down upon their own heads. So our quarrelling whether in word or thought, at Gods Dispensations, they hurt him not at all, but they hurt our selves much: *Jonah* felt the smart of it.

2. In stead of complaining of God, complain to him; men may do this; humble complaint to God is not murmuring, if it were, there would be little room for prayer: Nay, *Jesus Christ* had murmured, when he said, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* *David* saith, *Psal* 142. *I poured out my complaint before him*. But a quarrelling spirit sours our duties, and callings, and relations, and every thing to us.

3. Never lay down the duties of prayer and praise; no condition must hinder these: The Throne of Grace is set up for a *time of need*. And *Job* found place for praise in his greatest afflictions. And if you cannot at present, yet hope for a season to do so, *Hope thou in God for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God*.

F I N I S.



